THE REVELATION *of St. John the Divine*

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The earliest extant Greek manuscripts, as well as the writings of several Church Fathers beginning with Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–c. 202), entitle this book simply "Apocalypse of John." Later, medieval manuscripts elaborated the title to "Apocalypse of John the Theologian and Evangelist" and "Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian." The name as it stands in the KJV is a variant English rendering of this last title. The Greek word *apokalupsis*, "apocalypse," "revelation," means literally, "an unveiling," and in religious literature, especially, an unveiling of the future. The apocalyptic was a characteristic literary form among the Jews of the intertestamental and early Christian periods (see Vol. V, pp. 87–90), and also among certain writers of the primitive church (see below on "theme").

2. Authorship. The author of the Revelation repeatedly identifies himself as "John" (chs. 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8). The Greek form of this name, *Iōannēs* (see on Luke 1:13), represents the common Hebrew name *Yochanan*, "Johanan," which appears numerous times in the later books of the OT, the Apocrypha, and Josephus. This identifies the author as a Jew.

Various evidences clearly indicate that the name John was that of the author, and not a pseudonym, such as many Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic works bore. First is the fact that, in identifying himself as John, the author of the Revelation makes no attempt to establish himself as holding any position in the church. Various Jewish and Christian apocalypses are attributed to Hebrew patriarchs and prophets and to Christian apostles. If the Revelation were also pseudonymous, it would be expected that its author would attempt to identify himself specifically as an apostle. But the simple statement of the author that his name is John, "your brother" (Rev. 1:9; cf. Peter's reference to Paul, 2 Peter 3:15), is testimony that he is giving his true name. Obviously the writer was so well known to the churches that his name alone was sufficient to identify him and to lend credence to his record of the visions he had seen.

Furthermore, it appears that the practice of pseudonymity did not flourish when the exercise of the gift of prophecy was vigorous. On the other hand, during the intertestamental period, when, so far as we know, there was no recognized prophet among the Jews, religious writers often felt it necessary to attach the name of some ancient personage of high repute to their work in order to gain for it general acceptance. There was apparently no true prophet speaking for God, as the OT prophets had done. But with the coming of Christianity the gift of prophecy once more flourished. In the Christian church of the 1st century the supposed need for pseudonymity did not exist; Christians were convinced that their apostles and prophets spoke directly for God. But when the prophetic office among Christians fell into disrepute and finally disappeared in the 2d century, pseudonymous works bearing names of various apostles began to appear (see Vol. VI, pp. 41, 42). In the light of these facts it is reasonable to conclude that the Revelation, coming from the 1st century, is not pseudonymous, but is the work of a man whose real name was John.

Who was this John? The NT mentions several men by this name, the Baptist, the son of Zebedee, who was one of the Twelve, John, who was surnamed Mark, and a certain relative of the high priest Annas (see on Acts 4:6). Obviously the author of the Revelation

could not be John the Baptist, for that John died before the crucifixion of Jesus; nor is there any reasonable probability that it was the relative of Annas, of whom there is no indication that he ever became a Christian. Similarly, there is little evidence that John Mark was the author of the Revelation. The style, wording, and approach of the second Gospel are quite different from those of the Revelation, and there is no evidence that anyone in the early church ever seriously connected the Revelation with Mark.

By a process of elimination, John the son of Zebedee and the brother of James is left for consideration. He was not only one of the Twelve but also a member of Jesus' inner circle. Almost unanimously early Christian tradition recognizes him as the author of the Revelation. In fact, every Christian writer until the middle of the 3d century, whose works are extant today and who mentions the matter at all, attributes the Revelation to John the apostle. These writers are Justin Martyr at Rome (c. A.D. 100–c. 165; *Dialogue With Trypho* 81), Irenaeus at Lyons (c. A.D. 130–c. 202; *Against Heresies* iv. 20. 11), Tertullian at Carthage (c. A.D. 160–c. 240; *On Prescription Against Heretics* 36), Hippolytus at Rome (died c. A.D. 220; *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* xlii). These testimonies demonstrate the strong and widespread belief in the early church that the author of the Revelation was the apostle John. Furthermore, several early Christian traditions associate the later years of John with the city of Ephesus. Thus Irenaeus (*op. cit.* iii. 3. 4; *ANF* vol. 1, p. 416) declares that in his youth he had seen the aged Polycarp of Smyrna, who "conversed with many who had seen Christ," among them John, who had remained permanently at Ephesus until the days of Trajan (A.D. 98–117). Polycrates (A.D. 130–c. 200), bishop of Ephesus, the eighth of his family to be a Christian bishop, testifies that the John "who reclined on the Lord's bosom, … he rests at Ephesus" (*Epistle to Victor and the Roman Church Concerning the Day of Keeping the Passover*; *ANF*, vol. 8, p. 773). These statements coincide with the fact that John addresses himself to Ephesus and the other churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4, 11).

The only testimony during this period that would seem to discount the view that the author of the Revelation was the apostle John comes from the early Christian Father Papias (died c. A.D. 163). The works of Papias are lost, and all that is extant from his works is contained in highly fragmentary form in quotations preserved by later writers. Two of these relate to John's death. One, a manuscript from the 7th or 8th century A.D., which appears to be an epitome of the Chronicle by Philip of Side (5th century), declares: "'Papias in his second book says that John the Divine and James his brother were slain by the Jews'" (in R. H. Charles, *Revelation* [International Critical Commentary], Vol. 1, p. xlvi). Similarly, a manuscript of the Chronicle of Georgius Hamartolus (c. A.D. 860) says, "'For Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, being an eyewitness of this, in the second book of the Lord's sayings, says that he [John] was destroyed by the Jews, plainly fulfilling, with his brother, Christ's prediction concerning them'" (Greek text in H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John,* p. clxxv).

At first sight these quotations would seem to indicate that a Christian official living in the late 1st and early 2d centuries and in the vicinity of Ephesus testified that the apostle John was, like his brother, killed by the Jews too early to have written the Revelation in the time of either Nero or Domitian, the periods in which scholars usually place it (see below on "historical setting"). On closer scrutiny, however, several questions must be raised in regard to these quotations. The fact that the passage from the Oxford manuscript refers to John as "the theologian" indicates that the quotation has undergone some

modification by a medieval scribe, for this title is not applied to John in any extant Bible manuscript before the 8th century, and it is virtually inconceivable that Papias could have used it. The second quotation, from Georgius Hamartolus, is found in only one manuscript of that writer. Other manuscripts of his work say simply that John died in peace, but apparently they do not quote Papias at all. Consequently it is difficult to know just what Papias said regarding the death of John. If he did write that John, like James, was killed by the Jews, by no means does it follow that their deaths occurred at, or even near, the same time. The Revelation itself reveals that at the time of its writing the Jews still were causing difficulty for Christians, and if John did finally suffer a martyr's death, it may well have been the result of Jewish machinations.

A third quotation from Papias is recorded by the church historian Eusebius (d. A.D. 340):

"And I shall not hesitate to append to the interpretations all that I ever learnt well from the presbyters and remember well, for of their truth I am confident. … But if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said [Gr. *eipen*], and what Aristion and the presbyter John, the Lord's disciples, were saying [Gr. *legousin*]. For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice" (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 39, 3, 4; Loeb ed., vol. 1, pp. 291, 293).

This passage has been the subject of much conjecture. Eusebius interpreted it to mean that there were two men by the name of John who had lived in Asia in the late 1st century—the apostle, and another man who was a presbyter, or elder. Eusebius' opinion was that this latter man was the one whom Papias had known personally and that it was he who had written the Revelation, whereas the apostle had been the author of the Gospel.

It is possible, however, to interpret Papias' words in another way. As the German New Testament scholar Zahn (*Introduction to the New Testament,* 2d ed., vol. 2 pp. 451–453) has pointed out, in Papias' statement there is no real distinction made between presbyters and apostles. Papias says that he "inquired into the words of the presbyters," and immediately goes on to list apostles; then when he mentions "the presbyter John" he identifies him at once as one of "the Lord's disciples." The real distinction between the two groups he mentions lies in the words *eipen*, "said," and *legousin*, "were saying," which suggests that those in the first group mentioned were disciples of Jesus who had lived and borne their testimony before Papias' time, whereas those in the second group were still living, and available for information in his day. If Irenaeus' testimony (see p. 716) is accepted, the apostle John would be included in both groups, and so might conceivably be mentioned twice.

Eusebius' effort to derive two Johns from Papias' statement is made more understandable by the fact that his conclusions were influenced by the work of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (d. A.D. 265; see Eusebius *op. cit.* vii. 24, 25). In reaction against some Christians who were stressing a literal millennium, Dionysius wrote a work entitled *A Treatise on the Promises,* in which he sought to show by scholarly arguments that the Revelation was not written by the apostle John, but by another man of the same name. Dionysius is the first Church Father to question the apostolic authorship of the Revelation, and his arguments have remained the classic ones for those scholars who share his point of view.

Dionysius centered his criticisms chiefly about the fact that there are obvious differences between the language of the Gospel and that of the Revelation. The vocabularies of the two books portray marked differences; a number of words that occur with particular frequency in one are found but infrequently in the other. The following examples are particularly striking: *kosmos*, "world," appears in John 79 times, but in the Revelation only 3 times; *alētheia*, "truth," in John 25 times, in the Revelation not at all; *phōs*, "light," in John 22 times, in the Revelation 3 times; *agapaō*, "to love," in John 37 times, in the Revelation 4 times; *pisteuō*, "to believe," in John 100 times, in the Revelation not at all; *alla*, "but," in John more than 100 times, in the Revelation 13 times; *enōpion*, "before," in John once, in the Revelation 36 times; *emos*, "mine," in John 42 times, in the Revelation once. In referring to Christ as "the Lamb," the Gospel always uses the word *amnos*, whereas the Revelation always uses *arnion*, both of which mean "lamb." In the Gospel, Jerusalem is always *Hierosoluma*, whereas in the Revelation it is consistently *Hierousalēm*.

Dionysius also pointed out the fact that the Greek of the Gospel of John is correct and idiomatic, whereas that of the Revelation contains a number of passages that are unusual and cannot be explained in terms of correct Greek grammar and syntax. In view of these marked differences between the Gospel and the Revelation, Dionysius concluded that they were not by the same author. These criticisms appear to have had a wide influence upon the thinking of the Eastern Church in regard to the apostolicity, and therefore the canonicity, of the Revelation. Not only did Eusebius record the details of Dionysius' arguments, but he sought to establish them further by the passage from Papias quoted above. Similarly, in regard to the canonicity of Revelation, he reported:

Of the writings of John in addition to the gospel the first of his epistles has been accepted without controversy by ancients and moderns alike but the other two are disputed, and as to the Revelation there have been many advocates of either opinion up to the present (*op. cit.* iii. 24. 17, 18; Loeb ed., vol. 1, pp. 255, 257).

Although the evidence adduced by Dionysius to indicate two Johns is weighty, several other facts must be considered before a judgment is made. The view of Dionysius and Eusebius rests chiefly on two points—the ambiguous quotation from Papias, and Dionysius' arguments from linguistic differences between the Gospel and the Revelation. Although it cannot be proved that Papias did not refer to two different men by the name of John, if he did, his testimony—in so far as it may be used as evidence for the nonapostolic authorship of the Revelation—is contradicted by a half dozen other Church Fathers (see p. 716). Particularly important in this regard are the statements of Irenaeus, who himself had personal contact with Polycarp, a contemporary of both John and Papias. He seems to have known of only one John, the apostle, and states clearly that this one wrote the Revelation. In view of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that Papias' ambiguous statement must not be pressed strongly as proof of the existence of two Johns.

The linguistic differences between the Gospel and the Revelation are significant. Although differences in subject matter and style, which obviously exist between the two books, may account to some extent for the divergent vocabularies, one writer does not

ordinarily vary so widely in his use of such words as *alla*, *enōpion*, and *emos* (see p. 718). Regardless of subject matter or literary form, the same writer commonly uses or omits such words quite unconsciously. When two works vary as widely as do the Gospel and the Revelation in the employment of these words, it may seem difficult at first to think that they represent the work of the same writer.

However, this fact in itself does not necessarily mean that John was not the author of both works. The circumstances under which the two books seem to have been written may reasonably account for such differences as exist. In the Revelation, John declares that he received its visions while he "was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus" (ch. 1:9). That John was an exile there would imply that he was forced to rely upon his own linguistic abilities in the composition of the Revelation. Therefore it is not surprising that the language of this book is not always idiomatic, that Semiticisms sometimes shine through the Greek, and that its author was not at all times sure of his grammar. Such a situation is quite in keeping with the circumstances under which John is known to have written the Revelation. Furthermore, the visions were apparently written down as the scenes passed vividly before the prophet's eyes (see ch. 10:4). John may have purposely avoided revision lest the sense of drama be lost.

On the other hand, early Christian tradition indicates that the Gospel was written under entirely different conditions. The Muratorian Fragment, composed at Rome probably about A.D. 170—only a few decades after John's disciple Polycarp had visited there—declares:

The fourth of the Gospels is of John, one of the disciples. When encouraged by his fellow-disciples and bishops, he said to them: "Fast together with me the next three days, and whatever shall be revealed to each of us we shall recount to one another." That night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that while they all revised, John should narrate it all in his own name (Latin text in S. P. Tregelles, ed., *Canon Muratorianus*, pp. 17, 18).

Although this story obviously has fanciful features, such as the presence of Andrew and other apostles with John at the time he wrote the Gospel, it still may retain a kernel of truth, suggesting that in the composition of the Gospel, John may have had assistance. That this may have been so is indicated also by a statement attributed to Papias, preserved in a 10th-century manuscript:

This Gospel, then, it is clear, was written after the Apocalypse, and was given to the churches in Asia by John, being still in the body, as the bishop of Hierapolis, Papias by name, a beloved disciple of John, who wrote this Gospel with John by dictation, recounts in his *Exoterica*, that is, in the last five books (Latin text in Wordsworth and White, *Novum Testamentum ... Latine*, vol. 1, pp. 490, 491).

Although the details of this account cannot be taken as proved, these two statements strongly suggest that in the 2d century the idea was abroad that John had composed his Gospel with the assistance of others. In the light of this very early tradition, the statement at the end of his Gospel, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (ch. 21:24), would seem to be the affidavit of John's helpers to the truth of his account. If this reconstruction of the evidence is correct, it is not difficult to account for the linguistic and literary differences

that exist between the Revelation, written probably when John was alone on Patmos, and the Gospel, written with the help of one or more fellow believers at Ephesus.

To the foregoing evidence may be added the fact that there are certain striking literary parallels between the Revelation and the Gospel of John that suggest identity of authorship. Thus the Revelation speaks of "water of life" (chs. 21:6; 22:17), and the Gospel of "living water" (chs. 4:10; 7:38). The Revelation invites, "Let him that is athirst come" (ch. 22:17), and the Gospel declares, "If any man thirst, let him come" (ch. 7:37). The word *opsis*, "appearance," or "face," is used in the NT only in the Johannine writings (John 7:24; 11:44; Rev. 1:16). The same is true of the expression *tērein ton logon*, "keep my saying [or, "word"]" (John 8:51, 52, 55; 14:23, 24; 15:20; 17:6; 1 John 2:5; Rev. 3:8, 10; 22:7, 9), and *onoma autō*, "his name," literally, "a name to him" (John 1:6; 3:1; Rev. 6:8). Except where direct reference is made to OT symbolism, Christ is characterized as the Lamb only in the Gospel of John and in the Revelation (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6; and 28 other times).

Therefore, although evidence may be presented against the Johannine authorship of the Revelation, it must be recognized that the arguments for the traditional view, that the author of the Revelation was the apostle John, are reasonable and sound. This commentary accepts the traditional view. Compare AA 578–585.

3. Historical Setting. Modern scholars are divided as to whether the writing of the Revelation should be assigned to a comparatively early date during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54–68; see Vol. VI, p. 81) or to that of Vespasian (A.D. 69–79; see Vol. VI, p. 86), or to a later date toward the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96; see Vol. VI, p. 86).

Generally, those scholars who prefer an early date for the Revelation identify the persecution referred to in the letters to the seven churches as that suffered by Christians under Nero (A.D. 64), or possibly subsequently under Vespasian, although it is not clear to what extent the latter emperor persecuted the church. They believe that the disordered world portrayed by the Revelation reflects the troubles that disturbed the city of Rome from the last years of Nero to the early years of Vespasian. They see in the beast that suffers a deadly wound and is healed (ch. 13:3) and in the beast that "was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (ch. 17:8) a representation of Nero, of whom, after his death, a popular legend declared that he would one day reappear. Similarly they see the mystic number 666 (ch. 13:18) as symbolic of Nero Caesar, when spelled in Hebrew consonantal letters (*Nrwn Qsr*). These evidences have led a number of outstanding scholars to date the Revelation in the late 60's or 70's of the 1st century.

This reasoning, though apparently based on historical incidents, depends for its plausibility on the interpretation given to certain of the statements in the Revelation. But such an interpretation is, of course, subjective, and has not been accepted by many able scholars in the past. Nor is it accepted by this commentary, which believes that the prophecies of the Revelation have an application also to what is beyond the immediate and local situation (cf. on ch. 1:11). Any evidence for the date of the writing of the Revelation must be based primarily, at least, on other kinds of evidence and reasoning.

The testimony of early Christian writers is almost unanimous that the book of Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian. Irenaeus, who claims to have had a personal connection with John through Polycarp, declares of the Revelation, "For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's

reign" (*op. cit.* v. 30. 3; *ANF*, vol. 1, pp. 559, 560). Victorinus (died c. A.D. 303) says, "When John said these things he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the labour of the mines by Caesar Domitian. There, therefore, he saw the Apocalypse" (*Commentary on the Apocalypse,* on ch. 10:11; *ANF*, vol. 7, p. 353; see on Rev. 1:9). Eusebius (*op. cit.* iii. 20. 8, 9) records that John was sent to Patmos by Domitian, and that when those who had been unjustly banished by Domitian were released by his successor, Nerva (A.D. 96–98; see Vol. VI, p. 87), the apostle returned to Ephesus.

Such early Christian testimony leads the authors of this commentary to place the writing of the Revelation during the time of Domitian's reign, which ended in A.D. 96.

It is interesting, therefore, to mention briefly something of the conditions existing in the empire particularly as they affect Christians during the time of Domitian. It was under this emperor that the question of emperor worship became, for the first time, a crucial issue for Christians. Nowhere was this more true than in the Roman province of Asia, the area to which the letters to the seven churches were first directed. See on ch. 1:1, 11.

Emperor worship existed in some Mediterranean lands before Alexander the Great. He had been deified, as had his successors. When the Romans conquered the East, their generals and proconsuls were often hailed as deities. This was especially true in the province of Asia, where the Romans had always been popular. It was common to build temples to the goddess Roma, a personification of the spirit of empire, and with her worship was associated that of the emperors. In 195 B.C. a temple was erected to her at Smyrna. In 29 B.C. Augustus granted permission for the building of a temple at Ephesus for the joint worship of Roma and Julius Caesar, and of one at Pergamum for the worship of Roma and himself. This was the first instance of a cult for a living emperor. Augustus did not urge the worship of himself, but in view of the desires of the local people he doubtless considered such worship a wise measure from a political point of view. Gradually, in these cults, the worship of Roma became less important and that of the emperor became the salient feature. Worship of the emperor by no means replaced that of the local gods, but was added, and served as a means of uniting the empire. Rituals in worship of the emperor were not always easily distinguishable from patriotic ceremonies. At the same time the worship of a living emperor was discouraged at Rome, although the Senate did officially deify certain dead emperors.

Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37–41) was the first emperor to urge the worship of himself. He persecuted the Jews for refusing to worship him, and doubtless would also have directed his wrath at Christians had they been significant enough at the time for his notice. His successors were more lenient on the question and did not persecute for nonconformity.

The next emperor to make an issue over the worship of himself was Domitian (A.D. 81–96). Christianity was as yet without legal recognition by the Roman government (see p. 573), but even such a religion as that was not likely to be persecuted by the Romans unless it ran afoul of the law. Now Christianity did just that. Domitian zealously sought to establish his claim to deity in the minds of the populace, and to force his subjects to worship him. Suetonius records that he issued a circular letter in the name of his procurators, beginning with the words, "'Our Master and our God bids that this be done'" (*Domitian* xiii. 2; Loeb ed., *Suetonius* vol. 2, p. 367).

An intriguing passage from the Roman historian Dio (*Roman History* lxvii. 14. 1–3; Loeb ed., vol. 8, p. 349) seems to throw some light on this persecution:

And the same year [A.D. 95] Domitian slew, along with many others, Flavius Clemens the consul, although he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor's. The charge brought against them both was that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned. Some of these were put to death, and the rest were at least deprived of their property. Domitilla was merely banished to Pandateria.

Although on first sight this passage seems to record a persecution of Jews (and according to the Jewish historian H. Graetz, Domitian's cousin was a Jewish proselyte [*History of the Jews,* vol. 2, pp. 387–389]), scholars have suggested that it is really Christianity for which Flavius Clemens and his wife were punished. From the standpoint of a pagan historian not intimately acquainted with Christianity, "Jewish ways" would be a logical description for Christianity, and "atheism" might well represent the refusal of Christians to worship the emperor. Eusebius (*op. cit.* iii. 18. 4), apparently confusing the relationship between Domitilla and Clemens, says that Domitian exiled a niece of Clemens, named Flavia Domitilla, because she was a Christian. Probably the two references are to the same person, and they suggest that the persecution involved even the imperial family.

Such conditions of persecution for refusal to worship at the emperor's shrine doubtless constitute the immediate background of John's exile to Patmos, and thus of the writing of the book of Revelation. Apparently all the twelve apostles but John were dead, and he was an exile on the isle of Patmos. Christianity had entered its second generation. Most of those who had known the Master were now in their graves. The church was faced with the fiercest external threat it had yet known, and it needed a new revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, the visions given to John met a specific need in their own time. Through them heaven was opened to the suffering church, and Christians, who refused to bow to the pomp and circumstance of the emperor, were given reassurance that their Lord, now ascended and standing at the throne of God, infinitely transcended in majesty and power any earthy monarch who might demand their worship. See AA 581–583. For the significance of emperor worship in relation to John's statement regarding the "Lord's day" see on ch. 1:10.

4. Theme. At the very beginning (ch. 1:1) this book announces itself as an apocalypse, an unveiling of the mysteries of the future culminating in the triumph of Jesus Christ. Apocalyptic writings had been a prominent type of Jewish religious literature for more than two centuries. Indeed, the first-known apocalypse, the book of Daniel, appeared at the time of the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C. When the Maccabean wars once more brought political independence to the Jews 400 years later, Messianic expectations looking toward the expected new Jewish kingdom ran high, and gave rise to a body of apocalyptic literature that drew to a greater or less degree on the literary form and symbols of Daniel. When, in the following century, Roman conquest dashed the hopes of the Jews for the realization of a Messianic kingdom through the Hasmonaeans (see Vol. V, p. 34), Messianic expectations became, if anything, more intense as the Jews anticipated a messiah who would overthrow the Romans. During the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D. such hopes continued to provide the incentive for more apocalyptic works. For a survey of Jewish apocalyptic literature see Vol. V, pp. 87–90.

It is not surprising, then, that in the NT, written largely, if not entirely, by Jews for a church that was chiefly Jewish in its religious background, God would place an apocalypse setting forth the lead up to and usher in the Messianic kingdom. In His messages to men through the prophets God expresses His will in human languages and in literary forms with which the people to whom His messages were originally addressed were familiar.

Although apocalypse is, indeed, prophecy, it differs from other Biblical prophecy (such as that in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets) in several important aspects, and these distinctive features are the earmarks of apocalyptic literature. Particularly significant among these distinguishing characteristics are the following:

1. *The Cosmic Sweep of Apocalyptic.* Whereas most prophecy is concerned largely with national and international problems centering chiefly in the history of Israel and the glorious future that might have been hers (see Vol. IV, pp. 25–38), apocalyptic plays upon the grander stage of the universe, and takes as its central theme the great controversy between God and Christ on the one hand, and Satan on the other.
2. *The Basis of Apocalyptic in Visions and Dreams.* The apocalyptic writer records the dreams and visions granted him while "in the Spirit" (see on ch. 1:10). He is often snatched away and carried to distant places, where he beholds scenes of majesty and grandeur that defy adequate description in human language, and where he converses with angels. Although such experiences are found repeatedly in the other prophets also, they are particularly characteristic of apocalyptic writings; so much so, in fact, that they form virtually the whole content of the apocalyptic sections of Daniel and of the Revelation.
3. *the Use of Allegory in Apocalyptic.* In prophecy, generally speaking, the symbols are concrete object lessons from everyday life; for instance, the potter and the clay (Jer. 18:1–10), the yoke (Jer. 27:2), and the tile (Eze. 4:1, 2). In apocalyptic prophecy, on the other hand, the symbols employed are almost always creatures never seen as such in actual life, such as multiheaded beasts, angels flying in heaven, and animals that speak and act with intelligence. Similarly, time periods, though rare in conventional prophecy, are generally given there in literal years (see Jer. 29:10), whereas in Daniel and in the Revelation, time periods repeatedly are used, and usually are to be understood on the basis of the year-day principle.
4. *The Literary Form of Apocalyptic.* Much prophecy is in poetic form, whereas apocalyptic prophecy (and similarly noncanonical literature) is almost entirely in prose, with only an occasional insertion of poetry, particularly in the case of hymns (see Rev. 4:11; 5:9, 10; 11:17, 18; 15:3, 4; 18:2–24; 19:1, 2, 6–8).

These considerations give point to the rule that to be rightly interpreted apocalyptic writing must be understood in terms of its characteristic literary structure and theological emphasis. Central to its message is the theme of the great controversy, with particular focus upon the cataclysmic end of this world and the establishment of the new. All this is portrayed in highly symbolic language, which may not always admit of exact interpretation (see on Eze. 1:10). In speaking of supernal things, literal language is sometimes utterly inadequate to convey the subtler realities of heaven. In some respects the figurative language of apocalyptic is similar to that of parables, and the same precautions are to be taken in interpreting both (see Vol. V, p. 204; cf. Vol. III, p. 1111).

The book is a revelation of Jesus Christ at work perfecting a people on earth so that they may reflect His flawless character, and guiding His church through the vicissitudes

of history toward the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. Here more completely than elsewhere in Holy Writ the curtain that separates the invisible from the visible is drawn aside in order to reveal, "behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will" (Ed 173).

Revelation consists of four major divisions, or lines of prophecy: (1) the seven churches, chs. 1–3; (2) the seven seals, chs. 4 to 8:1; (3) the seven trumpets, chs. 8:2 to 11; and (4) closing events of the great controversy, chs. 12–22.

Particularly in view of the fact that the language of the book is often highly figurative, it is essential to discover the intent and purpose of the inspired writer, and the meaning the book conveyed to the readers to whom it was originally addressed. Otherwise, the interpretation of its figures, and thus its message, may reflect mere personal opinion. Those first intended readers were Greek-speaking Christians who, whether Jew or Gentile, considered the writings of the OT canon to be the inspired Word of God (see on John 5:39; Acts 24:14; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and who would be disposed to interpret the new revelation in terms of the old. Accordingly, the following observations and principles will be found useful in an interpretation of the book.

"In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end," and in a special sense, it "is the complement of the book of Daniel" (AA 585). Much of what was sealed in the book of Daniel (see on Dan. 12:4) is unsealed in the book of Revelation, and the two must be studied together. The Revelation contains citations from, or allusions to, 28 of the 39 books of the OT. According to one authority there are 505 such citations and allusions, some 325 of which are to the prophetic books of the OT—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel in particular. Of the Minor Prophets, references to Zechariah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea are most common. Of the books of the Pentateuch, greatest use is made of Exodus, and of the poetic sections, Psalms (see on Luke 24:44). Some also find reflections from the NT books of Matthew, Luke, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. For illustrations of the way in which John borrows the language and figures of the OT see Additional Note on Rev. 18; see on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1; Eze. 26:13. An examination of the citations and allusions makes evident that he translated directly from the Hebrew OT, though at times under the influence of the LXX or a later Greek version.

A clear understanding of these citations and allusions in their historical setting in the OT is the first step toward understanding the passages where they occur in the Revelation. Study may then be given to the context in which John uses them, to ascertain their adapted meaning. In particular this applies to the names of persons and places, and to things, incidents, and events. Since many of the symbols of the book of Revelation were already known in extant Jewish apocalyptic literature, this literature is sometimes helpful by way of clarifying these symbols. Those familiar with contemporary Roman history will also observe that John's language is often descriptive of the Roman Empire and of the experiences of the church under its sway. Accordingly, a study of Roman history of the period clarifies some otherwise cryptic passages. Finally, attention should be given to contemporary modes of thought and expression, in the light of the cultural background of the time.

In determining the import of the successive scenes that passed before John in vision, it is well to remember that the Revelation was given to guide, comfort, and strengthen the

church, not only in his day, but throughout the Christian Era, to the very close of time (see AA 581, 585). Herein the history of the church was foretold for the benefit of, and vital counsel was addressed to, believers of apostolic times, to Christians of future ages, and to those living in the last days of earth's history, in order that all might have an intelligent understanding of the perils and conflicts before them (see AA 583, 584). For instance, the names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of history. The local church at Ephesus accordingly became a symbol of the entire Christian fellowship in apostolic times, but the message addressed to it was placed on record for the encouragement of believers in every age (see AA 578, 585).

It is reasonable to conclude that the characterization of, and admonition to, the church at Ephesus was particularly appropriate to the needs of that church at the time the message was written. It was similarly appropriate to the needs of the entire Christian church in the apostolic age, and thus, in brief, represents the experience of that period of the history of the church. It was recorded for the inspiration and encouragement of believers in every age, for under similar circumstances the same principles apply. By analogy, the same is true of the messages to the other churches. In view of the fact that the focus of each of the four major lines of prophecy is on the closing scenes of earth's history, the messages of the book of Revelation have particular import for the church today.

That a single prophetic passage may embrace more than one fulfillment is evident (see on Deut. 18:15). Some such prophecies have both an immediate and a more remote fulfillment, and in addition contain principles that are generally applicable at all times. Furthermore, "it should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional" (EGW MS 4, 1883).

Thus certain predictions that might have met their complete fulfillment at an earlier stage of earth's history have been deferred because of the failure of the church to measure up to its privileges and opportunities (see Vol. IV, pp. 30–34).

5. Outline.

I. Prologue, 1:1–3.
II. The Letters to the Seven Churches, 1:4 to 3:22.
A. Salutation, 1:4–8.
B. Introduction: the vision of Christ, 1:9–20.
C. To Ephesus, 2:1–7.
D. To Smyrna, 2:8–11.
E. To Pergamum (Pergamos), 2:12–17.
F. To Thyatira, 2:18–29.
G. To Sardis, 3:1–6.
H. To Philadelphia, 3:7–13.
I. To Laodicea, 3:14–22.
III. The Throne of God and the Book With Seven Seals, 4:1 to 8:1.
A. The heavenly throne, 4:1–11.
B. The triumph of the Lamb, 5:1–14.
C. The first six seals, 6:1–17.
1. The first seal: the white horse, 6:1, 2.
2. The second seal: the red horse, 6:3, 4.
3. The third seal: the black horse, 6:5, 6.

4. The fourth seal: the pale horse, 6:7, 8.
5. The fifth seal: the plea of the martyrs, 6:9–11.
6. The sixth seal: the day of God's wrath, 6:12–17.

D. The sealing of the 144,000, 7:1–8.
E. The great multitude, 7:9–17.
F. The seventh seal: the controversy ended, 8:1.

IV. The Judgments of God: The Seven Trumpets, 8:2 to 11:19.

A. Introduction, 8:2–6.
B. The first six trumpets, 8:7 to 9:21.

1. The first trumpet: fire, hail, blood, 8:7.
2. The second trumpet: the burning mountain, 8:8, 9.
3. The third trumpet: the falling star, 8:10, 11.
4. The fourth trumpet: sun, moon, stars smitten, 8:12, 13.
5. The fifth trumpet: locusts, 9:1–12.
6. The sixth trumpet: the angels in the Euphrates, 9:13–21.

C. The angel with the little book, 10:1–11.
D. Measuring the temple, 11:1, 2.
E. The two witnesses, 11:3–14.
F. The seventh trumpet: the triumph of God, 11:15–19.

V. The Final Conflict of the Great Controversy, 12:1 to 20:15.

A. Satan makes war upon the remnant people, 12:1 to 13:14.

1. Background of the conflict, 12:1–16.
2. Satan's declaration of war, 12:17.
3. The role of the leopard beast, 13:1–10.
4. The role of the two-horned beast, 13:11–14.

B. Issues involved in the last conflict, 13:15 to 14:20.

1. Satan's ultimatum to the people of God: the image and mark of the beast, 13:15–18.
2. Triumph of the 144,000 over the beast, its image, and mark, 14:1–5.
3. God's ultimatum to the people of earth: the three angels' messages, 14:6–12.
4. Defeat for those who reject God's final appeal, 14:13–20.

C. The seven last plagues: divine judgments upon the wicked, 15:1 to 17:18.

1. An affirmation of divine justice, 15:1–4.
2. Preparation for the wrath of God, 15:5 to 16:1.
3. The seven last plagues, 16:2–21.
4. The arraignment of Babylon the great, 17:1–18.

D. The extermination of evil, 18:1 to 20:15.

1. An affirmation of divine mercy; a final call to leave Babylon, 18:1–4.
2. The end of organized religious opposition: the desolation of Babylon, 18:5–24.
3. The coronation of Christ as King of kings, 19:1–10.
4. Christ's second advent and conquest of this earth, 19:11–21.
5. The millennium: the extermination of sin and sinners, 20:1–15.

VI. The New Earth and Its Inhabitants, 21:1 to 22:5.

A. The New Jerusalem, 21:1–27.
B. The river and tree of life, 22:1, 2.
C. The eternal dominion of the saints, 22:3–5.

VII. Epilogue: Admonition and Invitation, 22:6–21.

A. Reception of the book and its message, 22:6–10.
B. An appeal to be ready for the coming of Christ, 22:11–21.

CHAPTER 1

4 *John writeth his revelation to the seven churches of Asia, signified by the seven golden candlesticks.* 7 *The coming of Christ.* 14 *His glorious power and majesty.*

1. Revelation. Gr. *apokalupsis*, "an unveiling" (see p. 715). "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" may be thought of as John's own title to the book. This title categorically denies the charge that the Revelation is a sealed book and thus cannot be understood. It contains a message God purposed that His "servants" on earth should "hear" and "keep" (v. 3). This they could not do unless they first understood it.

Of Jesus Christ. In Greek, as in English, this phrase may be understood as declaring the Apocalypse to be either a revelation from Jesus or one that reveals Him. The context seems to imply that the former interpretation is the primary one here, for it is the revelation "which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants." At the same time the truth of the second meaning must not be overlooked, for this book is pre-eminently one that reveals Jesus in His heavenly work after the ascension. In this sense the Revelation is, in fact, complementary to the Gospels. They record Jesus' ministry on earth; the Revelation reveals His work in the plan of redemption since that time. Compare on ch. 19:10. Concerning the names Jesus and Christ see on Matt. 1:1.

Gave unto him. Since the entrance of sin all communication between heaven and earth has been through Christ (see PP 366).

Servants. Gr. *douloi*, "slaves" (see on Rom. 1:1). Early Christians commonly referred to themselves thus.

Shortly come to pass. In one way or another the thought that the various events foretold in the book of Revelation were to take place in the not distant future is specifically stated seven times—"things which must shortly come to pass [or, "be done"]" (chs. 1:1; 22:6), "the time is at hand" (ch. 1:3), and "Behold [or, "surely"], I come quickly" (chs. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). Indirect references to the same idea appear in chs. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10. John's personal response to these declarations of the soon accomplishment of the divine purpose was, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (ch. 22:20). The concept of the imminence of the return of Jesus is thus both explicit and implicit throughout the book.

The second coming of Christ is the great climactic event of the age-long conflict between good and evil that began when Lucifer challenged the character and government of God. Statements in the Revelation and elsewhere concerning the imminence of Christ's return must be understood against the background of this great conflict. God might justly have annihilated Lucifer when, in obdurate impenitence, he persisted in rebellion. But divine wisdom deferred the extermination of evil until the nature and results of sin became fully apparent to the inhabitants of the universe (see PP 41–43). At any one of various critical points in the history of this world, divine justice could have proclaimed, "It is done" and Christ might have come to inaugurate His righteous reign. Long ago He might have brought to fruition His plans for the redemption of this world. As God offered Israel the opportunity to prepare the way for His eternal kingdom upon the earth, when they settled the Promised Land and again when they returned from their exile in Babylon, so He gave the church of apostolic times the privilege of completing the

gospel commission. Another such opportunity came with the great second advent awakening of the 19th century. But in each instance God's chosen people failed to take advantage of the opportunity thus graciously accorded them.

Encouraged by inspired counsel, the Advent Movement, after 1844, expected Christ to come very soon. When, toward the end of the century, Jesus had not appeared, the Advent believers were repeatedly reminded that the Lord might have come "ere this" (see 6T 450; 8T 115, 116; 9T 29; DA 633, 634; GC 458). When challenged as to why time had continued longer than her earlier testimonies seemed to indicate, Ellen G. White replied, "How is it with the testimonies of Christ and His disciples? Were they deceived? … The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. … It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional" (*Selected Messages,* book 1, p. 67).

Thus it seems clear that although the fact of Christ's second coming is not based on any conditions, the repeated statements of Scripture that the coming was imminent were conditional on the response of the church to the challenge of finishing the work of the gospel in their generation. The Word of God, which centuries ago declared that the day of Christ was "at hand" (Rom. 13:12), has not failed. Jesus would have come very quickly if the church had done its appointed work. The church had no right to expect her Lord when she had not complied with the conditions. See Ev 694–697.

Thus the statements of the angel of Revelation to John concerning the imminence of Christ's return to end the reign of sin are to be understood as an expression of divine will and purpose. God has never purposed to delay the consummation of the plan of salvation, but has ever expressed His will that the return of our Lord be not long delayed.

These statements are not to be understood in terms of the foreknowledge of God that there would be so long a delay, nor yet in the light of the historical perspective of what has actually taken place in the history of the world since that time. To be sure, God foreknew that the coming of Christ would be delayed some two thousand years, but when He sent messages to the church by the apostles He couched those messages in terms of His will and purpose with regard to that event, in order to make His people conscious of the fact that, in the divine providence, no delay was necessary. Consequently, the seven statements of the Revelation concerning the nearness of Christ's coming are to be understood in terms of God's will and purpose, as promises conditionally set forth, and not as utterances based on divine foreknowledge. In this fact, doubtless, is to be found the harmony between those passages that exhort to readiness for the soon coming of Christ and those time prophecies that reveal how far ahead lay the actual day of the Lord.

Signified. Gr. *sēmainō*, "to indicate [or, "attest"] by a sign," "to announce," "to reveal," "to make known," "to explain."

Angel. Gr. *aggelos*, "messenger." Angels frequently function as bearers of divine revelations (see Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26; etc.). The present angel has been identified as Gabriel (see on Luke 1:19).

John. That is, John the apostle (see pp. 715–720; cf. on Mark 3:17). The Revelation is the only book by John in which he identifies himself by name (see Vol. V, p. 891; cf. 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

2. Bare record. Gr. *martureō*, "to testify," "to witness." The past tense shows that the author here refers to what he is about to write from the viewpoint of his readers, for

whom his act of writing will be in the past. The epistles of Paul (see on Gal. 6:11; Phil. 2:25) provide numerous examples of such usages of the past tense, as do the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The use of such a form was considered a courtesy to the reader. John declares himself a witness, bearing testimony of all that God had revealed to him.

Word. Gr. *logos* "word," "utterance," "message," "oracle" (see on John 1:1).

Of God. That is, from God, or spoken by God. John here refers back to "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" (v. 1). "The word of God," "the testimony of Jesus," and "all things that he saw" all refer to the same thing—"the Revelation" of v. 1.

Testimony of Jesus. This may refer to the book of Revelation being a message either *from* Jesus or *about* Jesus (see on v. 1). The context favors the former. The book is, of course, both.

Verses 1 and 2 illustrate a typical Biblical parallelism, in which the first and fourth lines and the second and third are parallel:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ"
"which God gave"
"the word of God"
"the testimony of Jesus Christ"

Saw. Words denoting visual communication and perception occur 73 times in the Revelation, and words denoting audio communication and perception, 38 times. The Revelation is a factual, eye- and ear-witness report of what John saw and heard while in vision.

3. Blessed. Gr. *makarios*, "happy" (see on Matt. 5:3). Some suggest that there may be an allusion here to Luke 11:28.

He that readeth. Doubtless a reference primarily to the one appointed by the ancient church to read the sacred scrolls in public. John anticipates the public reading of the epistle he now addresses to "the seven churches which are in Asia" (v. 4), in the presence of the assembled members of each congregation (cf. Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). This Christian practice reflects the ancient Jewish custom of reading "the law and the prophets" in the synagogue each Sabbath (Acts 13:15, 27; Acts 15:21; etc.; see Vol. V, pp. 57, 58). The implied command that the Revelation be read in the churches of Asia suggests that its messages began to be applicable to the church right in John's day (see on Rev. 1:11).

They that hear. That is, the members of each church. Note that there is but one reader—in each church—while there are many who "hear" what is read. The blessing that attended the reading of the Revelation in the "seven churches" of the Roman province of Asia belongs to all Christians who read the book of Revelation desiring a more perfect understanding of the truths therein recorded.

The words. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading simply "the word." This would refer to the message of the book as a whole rather than to the individual "words" in which the message was to find expression.

This prophecy. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "the prophecy." Some suggest that John here specifically claims equality for the Revelation with the prophetic books of the OT, which were read in the synagogue each Sabbath. Though the word "prophecy," as used in the Bible, refers to any message from God, whatever its nature

(see on Rom. 12:6), the book of Revelation may properly be called a "prophecy" also in the stricter sense of a forecast of future events.

Keep. The form of the verb in Greek implies the habitual keeping, or observance, of the admonitions of this book as a norm of life. See on Matt. 7:21–24.

Are written. Literally, "have been written," in the sense of "stand written."

Time. Gr. *kairos*, "time," in the sense of a particular moment of time, an auspicious season, a time designated in advance for some particular event (see on Mark 1:15). The "time" here referred to as being "at hand" is the time for the fulfillment of "those things which are written," the "things which must shortly come to pass," of Rev. 1:1 (see comment there). It is the imminence of these events that provides motivation for observing closely "the words of this prophecy." Accordingly, the Revelation is of particular moment for those who believe that "the time" of Christ's coming "is at hand." Compare Additional Note on Rom. 13.

At hand. Since we are living in the last moments of time, the prophecies of the Revelation are of particular import to us. "Especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work" (TM 112). "The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God's people" (8T 302).

"The book of Daniel is unsealed in the revelation to John" (TM 115). Whereas the book of Daniel speaks in broad outline of last-day events, the book of Revelation gives vivid details concerning these events, which are now declared to be "at hand."

4. John. See on v. 1. The fact that the writer feels no need of further identifying himself is evidence that he was well known to the church "in Asia." It testifies also to the authenticity of the letter, for any other writer than the one whom the believers "in Asia" would recognize as "John" might be expected to lay claim to authority and position. The simplicity with which the writer refers to himself comports with the self-effacing procedure followed by the writer of the Gospel of John (see Vol. V, p. 891).

To the seven churches. From this point to the close of ch. 3 the Revelation is framed somewhat in the form of an ancient letter, or rather, a series of letters. This epistolatory section is introductory to the remainder of the book, which is characterized by a succession of dramatic visions. For comment on the use of the number "seven" in the Revelation, and on the seven churches, see on ch. 1:11.

Asia. That is, the Roman province of Asia, a region some 300 mi. from east to west and 260 mi. from north to south, in the western part of what is now known as Asia Minor, in the present republic of Turkey (see The Journeys of Paul). In Hellenistic times this area had developed into the important kingdom of Pergamum, a leading center of Hellenistic culture. Concerning the circumstances under which Pergamum became the Roman province of Asia see Vol. V, p. 35. In NT times Asia remained an important center of Graeco-Roman culture. Paul spent many months there (see Acts 18:19–21; 19:1, 10), and the success of his labors in the area is attested by three of his epistles to Christians living there (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon). His first epistle to Timothy, who was then in charge of the church at Ephesus, and perhaps of the churches throughout the province, testifies to a well-established Christian community there. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and it is probable that the members of these churches in the Roman province of Asia were mostly Gentiles.

After the removal of the parent Christian congregation from Jerusalem, shortly before A.D. 70, Asia seems to have taken on increased significance as a Christian center. This was doubtless due to the presence and leadership of the apostle John. According to tradition he resided at Ephesus and traveled about in the surrounding area, "here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, there to ordain such as were marked out by the Spirit" (Clement of Alexandria *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* xlii; *ANF*, vol. 2, p. 603). Such an intimate connection between the apostle and the churches of Asia seems to be reflected here.

Grace … peace. See on Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:2. It has been suggested that this greeting came about from a combination of the ordinary Greek salutation *chairein*, "greeting!" (as in James 1:1), and the Hebrew greeting *shalom*, in its Greek equivalent, *eirēnē*, "peace." *Chairein* is probably related to the more religious term here used, *charis*, "grace." The two words "grace" and "peace" appear commonly in the salutations of the early Christian epistles, and together apparently constituted a characteristic form of greeting in the apostolic church (see Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3).

Him which is. Gr. *ho ōn*, "the being [One]," an expression apparently taken from the LXX of Ex. 3:14, where it is used to translate the divine name I AM. Like the Hebrew, this expression implies the eternal, timeless self-existence of God. The Greek reads literally, "from He who is," a phrase no more grammatical in Greek than in English. This, however, is not evidence of John's ignorance of grammar; his refusal to inflect the words representing the Divine Being was probably a subtle means of emphasizing the utter unchangeableness of God. From the context of vs. 4, 5 it is clear that this phrase refers to the Father.

Which was. God has existed from all eternity (Ps. 90:2).

Which is to come. Or, "the coming [One]." The series—"which is," "which was," "which is to come"—indicates that the last clause is a substitute for the future tense of the verb, and is equivalent to saying, "which will be." It has been proposed that the clause also refers to the second coming of Christ. This interpretation, while verbally possible, does not accord with the context, which shows that this was hardly in the mind of the writer.

The reference here to the Father sets forth His eternity and states that the same One who now continually exists has always existed and will always exist. God's personal existence transcends time, but a timeless eternity can be expressed in human words only by finite, temporal terms such as John employs here.

Seven Spirits. Concerning the significance of the number "seven" in the Revelation see on v. 11. Elsewhere in the book these seven Spirits are portrayed as seven lamps of fire (ch. 4:5) and the seven eyes of the Lamb (ch. 5:6). The association here of the "seven Spirits" with the Father and with Christ, as equally the source of the Christian's grace and peace, implies that they represent the Holy Spirit. The designation "seven" is probably a symbolic expression of His perfection, and may also imply the variety of the gifts by which He works through man (see 1 Cor. 12:4–11; cf. Rev. 3:1).

Before his throne. That is, before the throne of "him which is, and which was, and which is to come." The position perhaps implies readiness for instant service. See on ch. 4:2–5.

5. Jesus Christ. See on v. 1. The other members of the Godhead have already been mentioned in v. 4.

Faithful witness. In the Greek this title stands in apposition with "Jesus Christ," which is in the ablative case (according to some, a genitive of source), and the phrase "faithful witness" would normally be in the same case. Nevertheless, like the divine title for the Father (see on v. 4), it stands here unchanged in the nominative case. Some suggest that John thereby implies the deity of Christ and His equality with the Father (see Additional Note on John 1). Christ is the "faithful witness" in that He is the perfect representative of God's character, mind, and will to mankind (see on John 1:1, 14). His sinless life among men and His sacrificial death testify of the Father's holiness and love (see John 14:10; see on ch. 3:16).

First begotten. Gr. *prōtotokos*, "firstborn" (see on Matt. 1:25; Rom. 8:29; cf. on John 1:14). Though Jesus was not the first to rise from the dead in point of time, He may be regarded as first in the sense that all others resurrected before and after Him gained their freedom from the bonds of death only by virtue of His triumph over the grave. His power to lay down His life and to take it again (John 10:18) sets Him apart from all other men ever to come forth from the grave, and characterizes Him as the source of all life (see Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:12–23; see on John 1:4, 7–9). This title, with the one that follows, reflects the thought of Ps. 89:27.

Prince. Or, "ruler." This world is Christ's legitimate domain. Christ triumphed over sin and won back the lost heritage of Adam, and is the rightful ruler of mankind (Col. 2:15; cf. Col. 1:20; see Rev. 11:15). At the last day all men will recognize Him as such (see Rev. 5:13). But, recognized or not, Christ has overruled the affairs of earth for the completion of His eternal purpose (see on Dan. 4:17). The plan of redemption, made a historical fact by His life, death, and resurrection, has unfolded step by step toward that great day of triumph. See Rev. 19:15, 16.

That loved us. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "that loves us." True, the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ is now a historical fact, but He "love us" now fully as much as when He made the supreme gift of His Son.

Washed. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "loosed." This difference doubtless arose from the similarity between the Greek words *louō*, "to wash," and *luō*, "to loose." To be "loosed" from sins is to be set free from the penalty and power of sin (see on John 3:16; Rom. 6:16–18, 21, 22).

In his own blood. Or, "by His blood," that is, by Christ's death on the cross. It was a vicarious sacrifice (see on Isa. 53:4–6; cf. DA 25).

6. Kings and priests. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "a kingdom, priests," probably an allusion to Ex. 19:6 (cf. Rev. 5:10). Christ had constituted His church a "kingdom" and its individual members "priests." To be a member of the kingdom is to be a "priest." Compare the "royal priesthood" of 1 Peter 2:9. Those who have accepted salvation in Christ make up a kingdom whose king is Christ. Reference here is to the kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of men (see on Matt. 4:17). A priest may be regarded as one who presents offerings to God (cf. Heb. 5:1; 8:3), and in this sense every Christian has the privilege of presenting "spiritual sacrifices"—prayer,

intercession, thanksgiving, glory—to God (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9). Because every Christian is a priest, he may approach God on his own behalf, without the mediation of another human being, and on behalf of others. Christ is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), our great "high priest," and through Him it is our privilege to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16).

God and his Father. That is, God, even His Father.

To him be glory. Literally, "to Him the glory," that is, to Christ (see v. 5). The definite article "the" implies *all* glory. For comment on *doxa*, the word translated "glory," see on Rom. 3:23.

Dominion. To ascribe "dominion" to Christ is to acknowledge Him as the rightful ruler of the universe. After the resurrection He received "all power … in heaven and in earth" (see on Matt. 28:18). Christ merits the unending praise of mankind in return for His triumph over sin and death (see Col. 2:15). Satan had challenged Christ's right to "glory and dominion," but these are rightfully Christ's. With this doxology, or ascription of praise, John concludes the salutation to his letter (Rev. 1:4–6).

For ever and ever. Gr. *eis aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*, literally, "into the ages of the ages," and thus "forever." For a discussion of the word *aiōn* see on Matt. 13:39. John foresees no time limit to Christ's right to "glory and dominion."

Amen. See on Matt. 5:18.

7. Behold, he cometh. The salutation having been concluded with v. 6, John announces the theme of the Revelation. The second coming of Christ is the goal toward which all else moves forward. Significantly, he uses the present tense, "he cometh," thereby stressing the certainty of the event, perhaps also with a sense of its imminence (see on v. 1).

With clouds. See on Acts 1:9–11.

Pierced. Gr. *ekkenteō*, the same word John uses in his Gospel (ch. 19:37) when quoting from Zech. 12:10. Translators of the LXX apparently misread the Hebrew word *daqaru*, "they … pierced," in Zech. 12:10, as *raqadu*, "they danced in triumph," and so rendered it in Greek. The Fourth Gospel alone records the incident of the piercing of the side of Jesus (John 19:31–37). This point of similarity between the two books is indirect evidence that the Revelation came from the same hand as the Gospel of John. Though writing in Greek, he apparently ignores the LXX in both instances, and gives a correct translation of the Hebrew. The statement of Rev. 1:7 clearly implies that those responsible for the death of Christ will from the dead to witness His coming (see on Dan. 12:2). During the course of His trial Jesus had warned the Jewish leaders of this dread event (Matt. 26:64).

Wail. Literally, "cut themselves," in reference to the ancient custom of gashing or smiting one's own body as a sign of grief. In a figurative sense, as here, the word comes to a focus on the grief rather than on the physical act of striking the body. Here it reflects the remorse of the ungodly (see on Jer. 8:20).

I am. Gr. *egō eimi* (see on John 6:20).

Alpha and Omega. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, loosely comparable with the expression "A to Z." The phrase indicates completeness, comprehensiveness, and is the same in meaning as "the beginning and the end, the first

and the last" (ch. 22:13). In this instance the speaker is "the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come," identified in ch. 1:4 as God the Father (see comment there). However, in vs. 11–18 the expression "Alpha and Omega" is clearly identified with Christ, who also declares Himself to be "the first and the last." In ch. 22:13 the phrase "Alpha and Omega" refers to Christ, as is evident from v. 16. The Father and the Son share these timeless attributes (see Additional Note on John 1).

The beginning and the ending. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words here and in v. 11, but they stand fully attested in ch. 22:13.

The Lord. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "Lord God."

Which is. See on v. 4.

Almighty. Gr. *pantokratōr*, "ruler of all." The title recurs frequently in Revelation (chs. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, translated "omnipotent," 15; 21:22). In the LXX of Hosea 12:5 *pantokratōr* translates the Heb. *ṣeba'oth*, "hosts," commonly used with *Yahweh* as an OT designation for God (see Vol. I, p. 173). This title stresses the omnipotence of God. Compare 1 Sam. 1:11; Isa. 1:9; Jer. 2:19; Amos 9:5).

9. I John. See pp. 715–720.

Companion in tribulation. Apparently John was not alone in suffering persecution at this time.

Kingdom. That is, the kingdom of divine grace (see on Matt. 4:17. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" Acts 14:22).

Patience. Literally, "remaining under." The word here implies the exercise of self-control to endure a difficult situation when, by a surrender of faith, release might be obtained from the pressure of persecution. In Christ, Christians have the strength to "remain under" "in Jesus." See on Rom. 2:7; Rev. 14:12.

Of Jesus. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "in Jesus." Patience results from a vital connection with Him.

Was. Or, "came to be," implying that Patmos was not his permanent home, but that circumstances home, but that circumstances found John there.

Patmos. A small island in the Aegean Sea about 55 mi. (c. 90 km.) southwest of Ephesus. It measures under 10 mi. north and south by about 6 mi. east and west (c. 16 km. by 10 km.), at its widest point. Patmos is rocky and barren. Its unusually broken coast line contains many inlets. Writing in A.D. 77, Pliny (*Natural History* iv. 12. 23) reports that the island was used as a penal colony, which fact explains John's statement about being a "companion in tribulation." The apostle was on Patmos as a Roman prisoner (see pp. 80–85).

Some two centuries later, Victorinus of Petau (died c. A.D. 303) declared of the Revelation: "When John said these things he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the labour of the mines [Latin *metallum*] by Caesar Domitian" (*Commentary on the Apocalypse,* on ch. 10:11; *ANF*, vol. 7, p. 353). The Latin word *metallum* may refer also to a quarry. Inasmuch as Patmos may have had quarries but gives no evidence of having had mines, the former is probably here intended. Pliny's statement about Patmos being a penal colony is that of an informed contemporary of John, whereas that of Victorinus, though probable, must be classed as a tradition.

For the word. That is, on account of the word. The Greek is against the view that this means John was on Patmos in order to receive and record the visions there accorded him

(see on v. 2). In the present passage the phrases "word of God" and "testimony of [concerning] Jesus" refer to his inspired witness to the gospel for more than half a century. This had been the sole motivating purpose of John's life. In the bitter days of persecution under Domitian his fearless testimony became the occasion for banishment to Patmos (see p. 721).

10. In the Spirit. Literally, "in spirit," here meaning "in an ecstatic state." He became oblivious to the things of earth and aware only of the impressions conveyed to him by the Holy Spirit. Natural sense perception gave way completely to spiritual perception.

Lord's day. Gr. *kuriakē hēmera*. Various attempts have been made to explain this expression, which appears only here in Scripture. Some interpreters equate this term with "the day of the Lord" of the OT prophets (see Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph. 1:14; Mal. 4:5; cf. Acts 2:20). It may be granted that, taken by themselves, the words might be so interpreted. Those who thus explain the expression point to the fact that the Revelation focuses attention on the great final day of the Lord and events leading up to it (see on Rev. 1:1). To be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" could possibly be understood as meaning to be carried in vision down the stream of time to witness events connected with the day of the Lord.

There are, however, reasons for rejecting this interpretation. In the first place, when the phrase "day of the Lord" clearly designates the great day of God the Greek is always *hēmera tou kuriou* or *hēmera kuriou* (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Second, the context (Rev. 1:9, 10) implies that the term "Lord's day" refers to the time when John saw the vision, rather than the subject of the vision. Thus, John gives his location, "the isle that is called Patmos" (v. 9); his reason for being there, "for the word of God" (v. 9); and his condition in vision, "in the Spirit." These phrases all have to do with the circumstances under which the vision was given, and it is logical to conclude that the fourth does also, giving the specific time of the revelation. Most expositors so conclude.

Although unique in Scripture, the term *kuriakē hēmera* has a long history in post-Biblical Greek. Like its abbreviated form, *kuriakē*, it is a familiar term in the Church Fathers for the first day of the week, and in modern Greek *kuriakē* is the usual term for Sunday. Its Latin equivalent, *dominica dies*, is a common designation for the same day, and has passed into several modern languages, such as Spanish, *domingo*, and French, *dimanche*, both terms for Sunday. For this reason many scholars hold the opinion that *kuriakē hēmera* in the present passage also refers to Sunday, and that John not only received his vision on that day but also recognized it as "the Lord's day," presumably because on that day Christ had risen from the dead.

There are both negative and positive reasons for rejecting this interpretation. First is the recognized principle of historical method, that an allusion is to be interpreted only in terms of evidence that is previous to it in point of time or contemporary with it, and not by historical data from a later period. This principle has an important bearing on the problem of the meaning of the expression "Lord's day" as it appears in the present passage. Although this term occurs frequently in the Church Fathers with the meaning of Sunday, the first conclusive evidence of such use does not appear until the latter part of

the 2d century in the Apocryphal *Gospel According to Peter* (9, 12; *ANF*, vol. 9, p. 8), where the day of Christ's resurrection is termed the "Lord's day." Since this document was written at least three quarters of a century after John wrote the Revelation, it cannot be presented as a proof that the phrase "Lord's day" in John's time refers to Sunday. Numerous examples might be cited to show the rapidity with which words can change their meanings. Therefore the meaning of "Lord's day" here is better determined by reference to Scripture rather than to subsequent literature.

On the positive side of the question is the fact that although the Scripture nowhere identifies Sunday as having any religious connection with the Lord, repeatedly it recognizes that the seventh day, the Sabbath, is the Lord's special day. God is said to have blessed and sanctified the seventh day (see Gen. 2:3); He declared it to be the memorial of His act of creation (see Ex. 20:11); He called it specifically "my holy day" (see Isa. 58:13); and Jesus declared Himself to be "Lord also of the sabbath" (see Mark 2:28) in the sense that as Lord of men, He was also Lord over that which was made for man, the Sabbath. Thus, when the phrase "Lord's day" is interpreted in accordance with evidence prior to and contemporary with John's time, it appears that there is only one day to which it can refer, and that is the seventh-day Sabbath. See 6T 128; AA 581.

Archeological discoveries have thrown added light on the expression *kuriakē hēmera*. Papyri and inscriptions from the imperial period in Roman history found in Egypt and Asia Minor employ the word *kuriakos* (the masculine form of *kuriakē*) to the imperial treasury and the imperial service. This is understandable inasmuch as the Roman emperor was often called in Greek the *kurios*, "lord," and consequently his treasury and service were the "lord's treasury" and the "lord's service." Thus *kuriakos* was a familiar word in Roman official language for things pertaining to the emperor. One such inscription comes from as early as A.D. 68, so it is clear that this usage of *kuriakos* was current in John's time (see Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East,* pp. 357–361).

On this same inscription there appears a reference to a day named for the Empress Julia, or Livia, as she is better known.

On other inscriptions both from Egypt and Asia Minor, the term *sebastē*, the Greek equivalent of *Augustus*, frequently appears as the name of a day. Apparently these are references to special days honoring the emperor (see Deissmann, *loc. cit.*). Some have suggested that *kuriakē hēmera*, as used by John, also refers to an imperial day. This seems doubtful, however, for two reasons. First, although there were imperial days, and although the term *keriakos* was used for other things pertaining to the emperor, no instance of the word *kuriakē* as applied to an imperial day has yet been found. This is not a final proof, of course, for it is an argument from silence. However, the second point that may be raised against the identification of John's *kuriakē hēmera* as an imperial day appears to be virtually conclusive. This is the fact that both the Jews in the 1st century (see Josephus *War* vii. 10. 1 [418, 419]) and the Christians, at least in the 2d (see *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8), are known to have refused to call Caesar *kurios*, "lord." It becomes extremely difficult to think, therefore, that John would have referred to an

imperial day as the "Lord's day," especially at a time when he and his fellow Christians were being bitterly persecuted for refusing to worship the emperor (see pp. 721–723). It seems more likely that John chose the expression *kuriakē hēmera* for the Sabbath as a subtle means of proclaiming the fact that, as the emperor had special days devoted to his honor, so John's Lord, for whose sake he now suffered, also had His day. For a discussion of the origin of Sunday observance and of the designation of Sunday as "the Lord's day" see on Dan. 7:25. See AA 581, 582.

As of a trumpet. Comparison with a trumpet indicates the intensity of the voice.

11. I am Alpha. See on v. 8. In view of vs. 17, 18 it is clear that in the present instance these titles apply specifically to Christ. However, textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and."

In vs. 4–10 John addresses to the seven churches his own introductory statement of the circumstances under which he received the Revelation. Beginning with v. 11, he gives Christ's own authorization of the Revelation. It is appropriate that He should do so, for this is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 1). The revelation itself begins with v. 11.

What thou seest. Visual communication and perception dominate the Revelation (see on v. 2). John saw visions, panoramic scenes in symbol, which he portrays as fully and accurately as finite human language can. Many of these symbols represent infinite truths that transcend the words and experience of men. At times the apostle finds himself at a loss for words to describe fully what he sees, as for instance, when he beholds the throne of God (see ch. 4:3, 6). Nevertheless, throughout the Revelation the grandeur of God's way with His universe, the intensity of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and the glory of the final triumph are portrayed more vividly and magnificently than elsewhere in Scripture.

Book. Gr. *biblion*, "a scroll," the most common type of book in John's day. See Vol. V, p. 113.

The seven churches. The order in which the churches are listed both here and in chs. 2; 3 represents the geographical sequence in which a messenger carrying a letter from Patmos would reach these seven cities in the province of Asia. For a further discussion of the geographical setting of the seven churches see pp. 86–102; The Journeys of Paul. For further information on each church named see the individual messages to the churches in chs. 2; 3.

The seven churches are the first in a series of sevens in the Revelation. Thus there are also seven Spirits (v. 4), seven candlesticks (v. 12), seven stars (v. 16), seven lamps of fire (ch. 4:5), a book with seven seals (ch. 5:1), the seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb (ch. 5:6), seven angels with seven trumpets (ch. 8:2), seven thunders (ch. 10:4), a dragon with seven heads and seven crowns (ch. 12:3), a beast with seven heads (ch. 13:1), seven angels having seven vials containing the seven last plagues (ch. 15:1, 7), and the beast with seven heads, which are also said to be seven mountains and seven kings (ch. 17:3, 9, 10). This repeated use of the number seven with so many different symbols implies that it, too, is to be understood in a symbolic sense. Throughout Scripture the number seven, when used symbolically, is generally understood to indicate completeness, perfection.

As applied to the seven churches, then, this number may be expected to have a specific purpose. That there were more than seven churches in the province of Asia is clear from the fact that two other churches in that region, those at Colossae and at

Hierapolis, are also mentioned in the NT (see Col. 1:2; 4:13). Consequently it is reasonable to conclude that the Lord chose the seven churches here named because they were typical of the condition of the church as a whole—both in apostolic times and throughout the Christian Era (see p. 725; cf. AA 583, 585).

The messages to the seven churches applied to conditions in the church of John's day. Had this not been so, these messages would have mystified and discouraged the Christians in the churches of Asia who were to read them (see on Rev. 1:3). John would have proved to be a false prophet if the messages he addressed to his churches had not revealed the true situation in those congregations and had not been appropriate to their spiritual needs. These messages were sent at a time when the Christians of Asia were suffering great tribulation (see pp. 720–723), and their firm reproof, reassuring comfort, and glorious promises must have been designed to fill those needs (see AA 578–588). Accepting and heeding these messages, the Christian churches of Asia would be prepared spiritually to understand the drama of the great controversy portrayed in the remainder of the Revelation, and to maintain a steadfast hope in the ultimate triumph of Christ and His church.

Although the various messages to the seven churches must have applied in the first instance to the churches of Asia in John's own time, they were also relevant to the future history of the church (see p. 725). A study of history reveals that these messages are, indeed, applicable in a special way to seven periods that cover the entire history of the church.

Inasmuch as the number seven implies completeness, as noted above, it appears reasonable, also, to understand these messages as, in a sense, descriptive of the whole church at any time during its history, for doubtless every individual congregation throughout Christian history could find its characteristics and needs described in one or more of these messages. Accordingly, they may be said to have universal application, in addition to the local application in John's day and the historical application in successive periods. A Christian writer about A.D. 200 wrote that "John writes to the seven churches, yet he speaks to all" (Latin text in S. P. Tregelles, ed., *Canon Muratorianus*, p. 19). Although, for instance, the message to the Laodicean church is particularly appropriate to the church today, the messages to the other churches also contain words of admonition by which it may profit (see 5T 368, 481, 538, 612; 8T 98, 99).

12. See the voice. That is, see who was speaking.

Candlesticks. Gr. *luchnia*, "lampstands." The candle, in its familiar modern form, was not in general use in ancient times. Lamps were usually shaped in the form of a shallow bowl, into which oil was poured and a wick inserted. Accordingly, the "candlesticks" John saw were, apparently, stands surmounted by such lamps.

In v. 20 these lampstands are declared to represent the seven churches, and thus the whole church (see on v. 11). The fact that they are of gold would seem to imply the preciousness of the church in the sight of God. John sees Christ walking about in their midst (vs. 13–18), thus indicating His continuing presence with His church (see Matt. 28:20; cf. Col. 1:18).

The reference here to seven golden candlesticks is reminiscent of the seven golden candlesticks in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary (see Ex. 25:31–37). Obviously, however, these differ materially from the seven-branched candlestick of OT times, for John saw Christ walking about among them (see Rev. 1:13; 2:1). These "seven …

candlesticks" are specifically said to represent churches on earth, and are therefore not to be thought of as the heavenly counterpart of the seven-branched candlestick of the ancient earthly sanctuary.

13. The Son of man. Gr. *huios anthrōpou*. The Greek here is without a definite article. It is an exact translation of the Aramaic *kebar 'enash* (see on Dan. 7:13), and seems to have much the same meaning here as *kebar 'enash* in Daniel. What is said in comment on *kebar 'enash* (Dan. 7:13) would therefore apply also to *huios anthrōpou*. It is certain from Rev. 1:11, 18 that the One thus referred to—as in Dan. 7:13—is in Christ. While the title "*the* Son of man," with the definite article, is used of Christ more than 80 times in the NT, the expression "Son of man," without the definite article, is used of Him in the Greek NT in only two other instances (Rev. 14:14, which is clearly an allusion to Dan. 7:13; and John 5:27, where Jesus' humanity is emphasized).

Applying the same principle as with *kebar 'enash* (see on Dan. 7:13), we find that here John beholds Christ in vision for the first time. Who is this glorious being? He has the form, not of an angel or of some other celestial being, but of a man. He is human in form, albeit of dazzling brightness.

Although John wrote the Revelation in Greek, his mode of expression is often that of his native Aramaic (the Jewish language of NT times) rather than Greek. This is true of certain of his idiomatic expressions, and it is possible that *huios anthrōpou*, literally, "[a] son of man," is one of these. If so, "a son of man" would mean simply "a human being," "a man" (see on Dan 7:13). In the same way, "children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36) are simply resurrected persons, and "children of the kingdom" (Matt. 8:12) are people eligible for the kingdom. Similarly, "children of the bridechamber" (Mark 2:19) are wedding guests, "children of this world" (Luke 16:8) are those who live for this world, "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) are those eligible for punishment because of their evil deeds, and "sons of Belial" (1 Kings 21:10) are worthless fellows.

When the glorified Christ manifested Himself to John in celestial splendor He still appeared to him in the likeness of a human being. Although Christ was eternally pre-existent as the second person of the Godhead, and ever remains so, His assumption of humanity is for all eternity to come (see Vol. V, pp. 917–919). What a comfort to know that our ascended, glorified Lord is still our brother in humanity, yet at the same time also God! For a further discussion of this passage see *Problems in Bible Translation,* pp. 241–243.

Down to the foot. A long garment is a symbol of dignity.

Paps. That is, the breast.

14. White like wool. John grasps in vain for words with which to give an accurate description of what he sees in vision. At first sight of the whiteness of the hair of the One appearing to him in vision the whiteness of wool comes to his mind. But no sooner has he written this than he thinks of an even whiter substance, snow, and he adds it for a yet more accurate description. Perhaps also, the description of Dan. 7:9 comes to his mind.

Flame of fire. That is, a "fiery flame," emphasizing the brightness of His countenance and the intensity of His gaze.

15. Fine brass. Gr. *chalkolibanos*, a substance of uncertain identification. It was probably some metal like gold, burnished and radiant. The "brass" of Bible times was actually bronze (see on Ex. 25:3).

Burned. Rather, "having been burned," that is, fired in a furnace. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) a reading that refers this phrase to the "brass" rather than to the feet themselves. That is, the brass appeared as if fired in a furnace. The feet looked like brass that had been subjected to intense heat.

Many waters. In John's day the roar of the ocean and the crash of thunder were among the loudest and deepest sounds known to man. In their depth and majesty these are still unsurpassed as symbols for the voice of the Creator.

16. Right hand. Here, the hand of God represents His power to sustain.

Seven stars. This symbol represents the "angels," or messengers, sent to the seven churches (see on v. 20).

Went. The form of the verb in the Greek implies continuous action—the power of Christ is constantly at work.

Twoedged sword. Gr. *rhomphaia distomos*, literally, "two-mouthed sword." The *rhomphaia* was a large, heavy, two-handed sword. It is the word used in the LXX for the "sword" God placed at the entrance to Eden (see on Gen. 3:24) and for the sword of Goliath (1 Sam. 17:51).

The expression "two-mouthed sword" is apparently derived from Semitic usage, although it appears in Greek as early as the 5th century B.C. in the plays of Euripides. It is found much earlier than this, however, in the OT, where the equivalent phrase in Hebrew is *pi chereb*, "mouth of the sword" (see Gen. 34:26; 2 Sam. 15:14). Thus, in telling the story of Ehud, the writer of Judges says literally, "And Ehud made for himself a sword, and for it two mouths" (see Judges 3:16). Similarly, Prov. 5:4 speaks of a *chereb pioth*, "a sword of mouths," which the KJV correctly translates as "twoedged sword." This interesting figure of speech may be derived either from the thought of a man's sword as devouring his foes (see 2 Sam. 11:25; Isa. 1:20; Jer. 2:30)—its edge being its mouth—or from the shape of certain ancient swords whose handles were made in the form of an animal's head, with the blade protruding from the mouth.

John repeats the symbol in chs. 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21, where, in the sense that it comes forth from the mouth of Christ, it is an instrument of divine punishment. It appears best to understand it here in the same sense, as symbolic of Christ's authority to judge, and especially of His power to execute judgment. That the sword has two edges, together with the fact that it is said to be sharp, would seem to imply the incisiveness of His decisions and the effectiveness of His acts of judgment.

As the sun. The sun is the most brilliant light commonly known to man.

17. As dead. The first effect upon those accorded a vision of a divine being panoplied with the glory of heaven, was to deprive them of their usual physical strength (see Eze. 1:28; Eze. 3:23; Dan. 8:17; Dan. 10:7–10; Acts 9:4; cf. Isa. 1:5). Compare the experience of Daniel (see on ch. 10:7–10). The person so honored was completely overcome by a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness. For a discussion of the physical state of a prophet in vision see F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics,* pp. 51–61. For

instances of John's emotional responses to what he saw in vision see Rev. 5:4; Rev. 17:6. For two instances when John fell at the feet of an angel in worship see chs. 19:10; 22:8.

Fear not. Following the loss of natural strength, a prophet was supernaturally strengthened, usually by a touch of the hand (see Eze. 2:1, 2; 3:24; Dan. 8:18; 10:8–12, 19; cf. Isa. 6:6, 7). Often a celestial visitant uttered the command, "Fear not," to allay the fears that naturally well in the human heart when confronted by such a being (see Judges 6:22, 23; Judges 13:20–22; Matt. 28:5; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10).

The first and the last. See on v. 8. The expression here used is apparently quoted from Isa. 44:6, and is a direct translation of the Hebrew text and not a quotation from the LXX as in v. 8.

18. He that liveth. Gr. *ho zōn*, "the living [One]," apparently from the familiar OT term *'El chai*, "living God" (Joshua 3:10; etc.). The form of the verb here used implies continuous, living, abiding life. This declaration is particularly meaningful in view of the fact that He "was dead." "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" (DA 530; see 785). "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (see on John 1:4).

Was dead. Literally, "became dead," a reference to the crucifixion. Here is a clear indication that the One who appeared to John in vision was Christ.

I am alive. Gr. *zōn eimi*, "I am living," that is, I have continuing life, life that does not end, life that is self-perpetuating (see Vol. V, pp. 917–919; see on John 5:26). In spite of the death He suffered for the human race, Christ continues to be "the living [One]," for He is God. "The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life" (DA 530). See on Rev. 1:5. The word *eimi*, "I am," implies continuous existence and stands in striking contrast with *egenomēn*, "I was [literally, "became"]" dead.

For evermore. See on v. 6.

Amen. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

Keys. Keys are a symbol of power and jurisdiction. Compare on Matt. 16:19; cf. Luke 11:52.

Hell. Gr. *hadēs*, "the abode of the dead," "the grave" (see on Matt. 11:23). Christ's resurrection is the assurance that the righteous will rise "in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24) to life everlasting (see on John 11:25; Rev. 1:5).

19. Write. A repetition of the command of v. 11.

Hast seen. That is, in the vision thus far (vs. 10–18).

The things which are. Some hold that this phrase describes the present historical situation, particularly things concerning the church. They believe that in contrast with "the things which thou hast seen"—the vision of Christ (vs. 10–18)—"the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter," refer to actual historical events, presented symbolically.

Others hold that the clauses "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" simply refer to the things John had seen in vision, what he was seeing, and what he was still to see in the future (cf. v. 11).

20. Mystery. Gr. *mustērion*, "a secret," "a mystery," from a word meaning "one who has been initiated" (see on Rom. 11:25). In early Christian usage the term "mystery" did not mean something that could not be understood, as it does today, but something that could be understood only by those who were initiated, that is, those who had the right to

know. Thus Christ told His disciples that it was "given" unto them "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," but not to the multitudes (see on Matt. 13:11). Paul speaks of the resurrection as a "mystery" (1 Cor. 15:51), and often so refers to the plan of salvation itself (see on Rom. 16:25, 26).

The Jewish background of this expression appears in a passage in the Dead Sea *Manual of Discipline* (see Vol. V, pp. 91, 92) that speaks of salvation: "The light of my heart penetrates the mystery that is to be" (1QS xi. 3; in Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls,* p. 387). The term "mystery" appears repeatedly in the same document. The expression was also common in pagan mystery religions.

Here the term "mystery" is used of the seven "stars," a symbol thus far not explained. But now this symbol is termed a "mystery," in view of the fact that its interpretation is about to be made known. Thus, in the book of Revelation, a "mystery" is a cryptic symbol about to be explained to those who consent to "keep" (see on v. 3) the things revealed in this book (cf. ch. 17:7, 9), or one which God wills to make known to them. The symbols of the Revelation are also referred to as wonders (see on ch. 12:1) and signs (ch. 15:1).

Seven stars. See on vs. 11, 16. The present verse is a bridge between vs. 12–19 and the messages of chs. 2 and 3. It explains the symbols of vs. 12, 16 and prepares the way for the messages to the individual churches.

Angels. Gr. *aggeloi*, literally, "messengers," whether celestial or human. *Aggeloi* is applied to human beings in Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; cf. 2 Cor. 12:7. It has been suggested that the "angels" of the seven churches are their respective elders, or overseers, in John's time, and that the Lord was addressing the messages to them for transmission to their respective congregations. However, except for possibly the "angels" of the seven churches, the word *aggeloi* never refers to human beings in some 75 instances where John uses it in the Revelation. Whether it does so here is not clear from the context. However, it seems unlikely that God would send messages to literal angels through John, and the identification of these "angels" with the leaders of the churches is therefore to be preferred (cf. GW 13, 14; AA 586).

Seven candlesticks. See on v. 12.

Seven churches. See on vs. 4, 11.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 583; CW 175; DA 99; Ed 191; GC 341; 6T 128
1–37T 158; 8T 301
3 AA 583; COL 133; CW 175; DA 234; Ed 191; Ev 196; GC 341; PK 548; TM 113, 116; 5T 15; 6T 128, 404
5 COL 162; 6T 311, 367
5, 6 GC 416, 646
6 CS 129; 5T 475
7 DA 832; EW 53, 179, 292; GC 301, 625, 637; TM 232; 8T 116
9 AA 570, 575, 588; FE 109, 423; GC xiii, 78; GW 18; PP 129; SL 49, 71; 4T 525; 7T 288
9, 10 MM 37; 6T 128
10 SL 74
10–13AA 581
11 AA 585

13 MH 419; 5T 752; 8T 265
13–15GC 624
14 LS 65
14, 15 EW 16, 286
14–17AA 582
14–18SL 78
15 EW 15, 34; LS 65
16 GW 13 (more under ch. 2:1)
17 GC 471; SL 79; 5T 467
17, 18 CT 17; Ed 83; TM 95
18 DA 320, 483, 530, 669; PK 240; 2T 271; 7T 71
18, 20 AA 585
[1]

CHAPTER 2

What is commanded to be written to the angels, that is, the ministers of the churches of 1 *Ephesus,* 8 *Smyrna,* 12 *Pergamos,* 18 *Thyatira: and what is commended, or found wanting in them.*

1. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Ephesus. Some define the name Ephesus as meaning "desirable." In John's day Ephesus was the leading city of the Roman province of Asia, and later was its capital (see p. 88; John's Literary Productions; see on chs. 1:4; 2:12). It was situated at the western terminus of a great highway that crossed Asia Minor from Syria, and this, together with its location as an important seaport on the Aegean, made it a focal point for trade. Christianity appears to have been preached there first about A.D. 52, by Paul, when he stopped for a short time while homeward bound to Jerusalem and Antioch from his Second Missionary Journey. His friends Aquila and Priscilla settled there at that time, and, together with an Alexandrian Jew named Apollos—whose concept of Christianity seems to have been pre-Pentecostal—fostered the work of evangelization until Paul's return, probably a year or two later (see Acts 18:19 to 19:7). This time the apostle remained at Ephesus for about three years (see Vol. VI, p. 30), longer than at any other place on his recorded missionary journeys. This would seem to indicate that his work there was especially fruitful. His biographer, Luke, declares that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). It is probable, therefore, that during this time at least some of the other churches in Asia were established (see Col. 4:13, 15, 16). After his first Roman imprisonment Paul appears to have visited Ephesus again, probably about A.D. 64, leaving Timothy in charge (see 1 Tim. 1:3).

Nothing further is definitely known of the history of the church at Ephesus until its name appears probably about three decades later in the Revelation. However, tradition indicates that John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, became the leader of this church, presumably after the breakup of the Christian headquarters at Jerusalem about A.D. 68, during the Jewish-Roman War (see p. 716). Thus, at the time the Revelation was written,

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[1]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Ephesus must have been one of the leading centers of Christianity. Consequently it was fitting that Christ's first message by John should have been addressed to this church. Its central location with respect to the Christian world as a whole makes all the more understandable the fact that its spiritual condition could well be characteristic of the whole church during the apostolic period, the era of Christian history reaching approximately to the end of the 1st century (c. A.D. 31–100; see Additional Note at end of chapter). It may well be called the Age of Apostolic Purity, an attribute highly desirable in God's sight.

Holdeth. Gr. *krateō*, "to hold fast," a more vigorous expression than is used in ch. 1:16.

Seven stars. See on ch. 1:16, 20. In a special way the leaders of the church on earth are to be under the protection and control of Christ. In their appointed task they are ever sustained by divine power and grace. It is to be noted that the characteristic way in which Christ introduces Himself to each of the seven churches is drawn from the composite vision John saw in ch. 1:11–18.

Walketh. A more vigorous description of Christ's relationship to His church than in ch. 1:13, where John simply refers to Christ as being "in the midst of the seven candlesticks." As the individual churches of apostolic times enjoyed the watchcare, attention, and ministry of Christ, so has the Christian church as a whole throughout the successive periods of its history. Thus is fulfilled His promise to the disciples to be with them "alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Candlesticks. See on ch. 1:12.

2. I know. To each of the seven churches Christ declares, "I know thy works." His admonition is that of One who is fully acquainted with problems of each church and who is therefore able to recommend an appropriate and effective solution.

Thy. The singular is used because Christ is here addressing the "angel" (v. 1) who represents either each member of the church individually or the church as a single corporate unit. Christ deals with men both on a group basis—as a church—and also in terms of their direct, personal relationship to Him.

Works. Gr. *erga*, "deeds," "actions," "activities," more particularly, deeds as exhibiting moral character. The whole life and conduct of the church is known to Jesus Christ.

Labour. Gr. *kopos*, the lassitude, or weariness, that results from strenuous exertion, reflected in the word "toil." Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for omitting the word "thy" before "labour." This links more closely the thought of "labour" with that of the patience that accompanies it. It is as if Christ said, "I know what you have done, and I also know the toil and perseverance that were necessary to the doing of it."

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē*, "perseverance," "[active, steadfast] endurance," literally, "remaining under."

Canst not bear. Too often, now as in former times, the church is prone to "bear," or endure, evil teachings and practices in its midst, supposedly in the name of peace. Ministers of Christ may find it easier to remain silent concerning the pet sins of their congregations than to take a bold stand for truth (cf. Isa. 30:10; 2 Tim. 4:3). The church at Ephesus was to be commended for making a clear distinction between truth and error, whether in doctrine or in the life, and for taking a firm stand against error.

Them which are evil. That is, the false apostles immediately to be discussed in more detail. Gross doctrinal error is reflected, sooner or later, in gross misconduct. What a man does is inevitably the result of what he thinks and believes (see Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34; 1 John 3:3).

Tried. Gr. *peirazō*, "to test," "try." The church at Ephesus had diligently investigated the claims and teachings of these false apostles. Ignatius, writing early in the 2d century, speaks of the diligence of the Ephesian Christians in shunning heresy (*To the Ephesians* ix. 1).

In one of his epistles John cautioned believers with respect to the coming of "antichrist" and advised them to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1–3). The warning given by Paul to the leaders at Ephesus many years before, that "grievous wolves" would enter in among them "speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:29, 30), had been fulfilled. He had counseled the Thessalonians to "prove all things" and to "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). Peter had written at length concerning "false prophets" and "false teachers" (see 2 Peter 2). Compare 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14, 15. Though at first it might not be easy to recognize the subtle errors of their teachings, the teachers themselves could be known "by their fruits" (see Matt. 7:15–20).

Thus it is today, for the genuine "fruit of the Spirit" (see Gal. 5:22, 23) does not grow in the lives of those who teach and practice error. The sincere Christian who is sensitive to spiritual things is promised that he can, if he will, detect the unchristian spirit and motives that actuate every teacher of error (see on 1 John 4:1; Rev. 3:18).

Apostles. Among the more serious heresies that threatened the church toward the close of the 1st century were Docetism and an early form of Gnosticism. For a discussion of these and other heresies that beset the church of apostolic times see Vol. V, pp. 912, 913; Vol. VI, pp. 52–59. More specifically, an early tradition indicates that a Gnostic named Cerinthus visited Ephesus and fomented trouble for John and his congregation (see Irenaeus *Against Heresies* iii. 3. 4). What was true of Ephesus during this period with respect to struggles with false prophets seems also to have been true of the church in general.

3. Hast borne. The Ephesian church had refused to "bear them which are evil" (see on v. 2), but it did endure patiently the unavoidable affliction caused by the false teachers and the persecution that befell it at the hands of fanatical Jews and Gentiles.

Patience. See on v. 2.

My name's sake. See on Acts 3:16. The followers of Christ were known by His name; they were called Christians. It was their allegiance to this name, their loyalty to Him whom it signified as their Lord, that subjected them to persecution by the Roman authorities (see p. 720), and led to suffering at the hands of those who were bent upon subverting their faith.

Hast laboured. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. The original of v. 3 probably read, "And thou hast had patience and hast borne for my name's sake, and hast not fainted."

Fainted. Gr. *kopiaō*, "to become weary," "to become tired." Compare the use of *kopiaō* in Isa. 40:31, LXX; John 4:6.

4. Thy first love. This "love" probably included wholehearted love for God and for truth, and love for one another as brethren and for their fellow men in general (see on

Matt. 5:43, 44; 22:34–40). Perhaps the doctrinal controversies stirred up by the false teachers had given rise to a factious spirit. Also, in spite of diligent efforts on the part of many to stay the tide of false teaching, a number who remained in the church were no doubt affected in greater or less degree by it. To the extent that error had found a lodging place in the church, to that extent was thwarted the activity of the Holy Spirit as a messenger of truth (John 16:13), whose task it is to convert the principles of truth into a living force for the transformation of character (see John 16:8–11; Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 4:30; etc.). Furthermore, as the testimony of those who had personally associated with Jesus ended, as one by one they died, and the vision of the imminence of Christ's return (see on Rev. 1:1) began to fade, the flame of faith and devotion burned ever lower. For comment on other aspects of this departure from the pristine purity of faith and practice see Vol. IV, pp. 834, 835.

5. Remove thy candlestick. See on ch. 1:12. The church would forfeit its status as an accredited representative of Christ. The church had "fallen," but divine mercy patiently provided an opportunity to "repent" (cf. 2 Peter 3:9).

Except thou repent. In the Prologue of his epistle to the Ephesians, Ignatius reports that the church did heed the call to "remember," "repent," and "do the firstworks" (see also Ignatius *op. cit.* i. l; xi. 2).

6. Nicolaitanes. One of the heretical sects that plagued the churches at Ephesus and at Pergamum (see v. 15), and perhaps elsewhere. Irenaeus identifies the Nicolaitans as a Gnostic sect: "John, the disciple of the Lord, preaches this faith [the deity of Christ], and seeks, by the proclamation of the Gospel, to remove that error which by Cerinthus had been disseminated among men, and a long time previously by those termed Nicolaitans, who are an offset of that 'knowledge' might confound them, and persuade them that there is but one God, who made all things by His Word" (*op. cit.* iii. 11. 1; *ANF*, vol. 1, p. 426). There is also historical evidence of a Gnostic sect called Nicolaitans a century or so later. Some Church Fathers who report concerning this sect (Irenaeus *op. cit.* i. 26. 3; Hippolytus *Refutation of All Heresies* vii. 24) identify its founder as Nicolas of Antioch, one of the seven deacons (see Acts 6:5). Whether the tradition concerning Nicolas the deacon is correct, we do not know, but the sect may be the same as the one mentioned by John. In the 2d century, at least, adherents of this sect appear to have taught that deeds of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul, and consequently have no bearing on salvation.

7. He that hath an ear. That is, to heed the counsel given (see on ch. 1:3; cf. on Isa. 6:9, 10; Matt. 11:15). The same formula accompanies the promise to each of the seven churches.

Hear. The Greek of this passage implies that those who hear will do so with understanding (cf. on Acts 9:4). Hearing God's word is meaningless unless the life thenceforth is conformed to the pattern of what has been heard (see on Matt. 19:21–27).

The churches. The promise here addressed particularly to the church at Ephesus belongs in a special sense to all "the churches" of apostolic times, as represented by the church at Ephesus. Though particularly appropriate to them, it applies also to believers in all ages (see on ch. 1:11).

Overcometh. The form of the verb in Greek implies that the person "continues to overcome," or "keeps on winning." The thought of overcoming is a recurring theme in the Revelation. The promises of the Revelation have been especially precious to God's

persecuted children in all ages. However, the context (vs. 2–6) implies that the overcoming here referred to is, in a special sense, victory over the false apostles and teachers who had been tempting believers to eat of the tree of human knowledge. How appropriate that their reward for overcoming should be access to the tree of life

Tree of life. See on Gen. 2:9; Rev. 22:2.

In the midst. As in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). The location stresses the importance of the tree in God's plan for a perfect world.

Paradise. See on Luke 23:43. The Garden of Eden was "paradise" on earth. When Eden is restored to this world (see PP 62; GC 646, 648), earth will once more become a "paradise."

For the application of the message to the church at Ephesus to a certain period in history see Additional Note at end of chapter. For the application of the message to the literal church see on Rev. 1:11.

8. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Smyrna. This name was long thought to be derived from *muron*, the name of an aromatic gum derived from the Arabian tree *Balsamodendron myrrha*. This gum was used for embalming the dead, and medicinally as an unguent, or salve, and was burned as incense. See on Matt. 2:11. More recently, scholars tend to favor a derivation from the name of an Anatolian goddess, Samorna, who was worshiped in the city (see p. 93). Concerning the ancient city of Smyrna see p. 91; John's Literary Productions.There is no record as to when or under whose ministry the church in Smyrna was established. This church is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Historically, the Smyrna period of the church may be thought of as beginning about the close of the 1st century (c. A.D. 100) and continuing until about A.D. 313, when Constantine espoused the cause of the church (see Additional Note at end of chapter; see on v. 10). Some suggest A.D. 323 or 325 as the date of his supposed conversion to Christianity. Actually, the prophecies of chs. 2 and 3 are not, strictly speaking, time prophecies, and dates are suggested simply to facilitate an approximate correlation of prophecy with history.

The first and the last. See on ch. 1:8, 17.

Was dead. See on chs. 1:18; 2:1. To a church facing persecution and death for its faith, emphasis on life in Christ would be especially meaningful.

9. Thy. See on v. 2.

Works. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between retaining and omitting this word. See on v. 2.

Tribulation. Or, "distress," "trouble" "affliction." Intermittent persecution at the hands of various Roman emperors characterized the experience of the church during this period. Under Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–138), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180), persecution was sporadic and localized. The first general, systematic persecution of Christians was conducted by Decius (249–251) and Valerian (253–259). Political oppression reached a bloody climax under Diocletian (284–305) and his immediate successors (305–313). Historically, the period represented by the Smyrna church may well be called the Age of Martyrdom. The centuries since have been fragrant (see on v. 8) with the love and devotion of the thousands of unnamed martyrs of this period who were "faithful unto death."

Poverty. Gr. *ptōcheia*, "abject poverty" (cf. on Mark 12:42). Doubtless the church at Smyrna was not so large or so prosperous as the neighboring congregation at Ephesus. The Christians at Ephesus had left their "first love," but no such rebuke is sent to those at Smyrna. Instead, Christ reminds them that spiritually they are "rich" (see on James 2:5).

Blasphemy. Gr. *blasphēmia*, "evil speaking," whether of God or man. In the present context the translation "slander" may be preferable.

Jews. Probably "Jews" in a figurative, not a literal, sense (in the sense that Christians now are sometimes described as Israel see Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7; Gal. 3:28, 29; 1 Peter 2:9). As here used, the term no doubt refers to those who claimed to serve God, but actually served Satan.

The figure has its basis in history. The book of Acts reveals that many of the troubles of the early church grew out of slanderous accusations hurled at them by Jews (see Acts 13:45; 14:2, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:5, 6, 12; 21:27). Apparently this situation was true at Smyrna. In the 2d century Jews are said to have brought about the martyrdom of Polycarp, a bishop of Smyrna. During this time Tertullian speaks of the synagogues as "fountains of persecution" (*Scorpiace* 10; *ANF*, vol. 3, p. 643).

Are not. They were hypocrites.

Synagogue of Satan. Compare the opprobrious epithet, "generation [brood] of vipers" (Matt. 3:7). As a center of Jewish communal life the synagogue (see Vol. V, pp. 56–58) was doubtless the place where many an evil plot was formed against Christians. The name Satan means "accuser," or "adversary" (see on Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10). These Jewish centers became, literally, "synagogues of the accuser."

10. Fear none. See on James 1:2; cf. John 16:33.

Shalt suffer. Or, "art about to suffer." Apparently, the Smyrna church had been an important target of Jewish slander, but the members had not yet felt the full brunt of persecution. However, the Christians there doubtless knew of the persecution that already raged elsewhere, and must have anticipated future trouble for themselves. This is implied by the form of the verb here translated "fear," which indicates that they were already fearful. Christ consoles them with the assurance that, despite the prospect of persecution, they need not be afraid. See on Matt. 5:10–12.

Tried. Or, "tested." Satan would subject them to persecution in order to prevail upon them to relinquish their faith. God would permit the persecution as a means of strengthening and proving the genuineness of their faith. Though Satan may rage against the church, God's hand accomplishes His purpose. See on James 1:2; Rev. 2:9.

The Roman emperor Trajan (A.D. 98–117) laid down the first official Roman policy toward Christianity. In the famous ninety-seventh letter, written to Pliny the Younger, his governor in Bithynia and Pontus in Asia Minor, Trajan outlined a procedure for dealing with Christians, who were, at that time, an illegal religious society. He ordered that Roman officials were not to hunt Christians out, but that if persons were brought before them for other offenses and proved to be Christians, they were to be executed unless they recanted. This regulation, though by no means uniformly enforced, remained the law until Constantine issued his edict of toleration in A.D. 313.

Thus, for two centuries Christians were constantly subject to the possibility of sudden arrest and death for their faith. Their well-being depended in large measure upon the favor of their pagan and Jewish neighbors, who might either leave them in peace or complain against them before the authorities. This might be termed permissive

persecution. The emperor did not take the initiative in persecuting Christians, but permitted his own representatives and the local authorities to take such measures against Christians as they might see fit. This policy left the Christians to the mercy of the various local administrations under which they lived. Especially in times of famine, earthquake, storm, and other catastrophes, Christians found themselves the objects of attack, their pagan neighbors supposing that by refusing to worship the gods the Christians had brought divine wrath upon the whole country.

At times, however, the Roman government carried on aggressive persecution against the church (see on v. 9). Thinking Romans observed that Christianity was constantly growing in extent and in influence throughout the empire, and that it was fundamentally incompatible with the Roman way of life. They realized that, given time, it would destroy the Roman way of life. Accordingly, it was often the more capable emperors who persecuted the church, whereas those who took their responsibilities less seriously were usually content not to molest Christians.

The first general, systematic persecution of the church was undertaken by the emperor Decius, whose imperial edict of the year 250 decreed the universal suppression of Christianity by means of torture, death, and the confiscation of property. The occasion for this decree was the millennial celebration of the founding of Rome, some three years earlier, when the decadent state of the empire was rendered more apparent by comparison with the glories of the past. Christianity became the scapegoat, and it was decided to obliterate the church in order, presumably, to save the empire. This policy lapsed with the death of Decius in A.D. 251, but was revived by Valerian a short time later. With his death the policy again lapsed, and not until the reign of Diocletian did the church face another major crisis (see below on "ten days").

Ten days. This expression has been understood in two ways. On the basis of the year-day principle of reckoning prophetic time periods (see on Dan. 7:25), it has been interpreted as a period of ten literal years and applied to the period of the most severe imperial persecution (A.D. 303–313), begun by Diocletian and continued by his associate and successor Galerius. This was an attempt to wipe out Christianity by burning the Scriptures, destroying church buildings, and imprisoning the leaders. These rulers believed that the church had grown to such dimensions of strength and popularity in the empire that unless Christianity should be promptly stamped out the traditional Roman way of life would cease to exist and the empire itself would disintegrate. Consequently they inaugurated a policy designed to exterminate the church. Diocletian's first decree against Christians was issued in the year 303, banning the practice of Christianity throughout the empire.

Persecution began in the army and spread throughout the empire. The Roman authorities concentrated their terrors on the Christian clergy, in the belief that if the shepherds were removed, the flock would scatter. The horrors of this persecution are vividly described by the church historian Theodoret (*Ecclesiastical History* i. 6), who describes the gathering of the bishops of the church to the Council of Nicaea some years after the end of the persecution (A.D. 325). Some came with out eyes, some without arms, which had been pulled from their sockets, others with their bodies horribly maimed in different ways. Many, of course, did not survive this time of trouble. In 313, ten years after the beginning of these persecutions, Constantine and his colleague Licinius issued an edict that granted Christians (and all others) liberty to practice their religion.

Other interpreters think it is not altogether certain that the "ten days" were intended to represent prophetic time. They reason thus: The "things which thou shalt suffer," "the devil," "prison," and "death" are obviously literal, and it would seem most natural to expect the "ten days" to be literal also. In this case the number "ten" would be considered a round number, as is so often the case in Scripture (see Eccl. 7:19; Isa. 5:10; Dan. 1:20; Amos 6:9; Haggai 2:16; Zech. 8:23; Matt. 25:1, 28; Luke 15:8; etc.; cf. Mishnah *Aboth* 5. 1–9). As a round number, "ten days" would represent a brief period of persecution such as the literal church at Smyrna no doubt suffered in apostolic times. It would be entirely consistent with sound principles of prophetic interpretation (see on Deut. 18:15) for the "ten days" to have a literal application to the immediate historical situation at Smyrna and a figurative application to the period of history represented by the Smyrna church (see on Rev. 1:11; 2:1, 8; see p. 725; Additional Note at end of chapter).

Be thou faithful. The Greek verb form implies, "continue to be faithful." Smyrna proved to be a faithful church.

Unto death. The Greek implies, "up to and including death."

Crown. Gr. *stephanos*, "a chaplet," or "garland, of victory," not a diadem of rulership. This word was used for the wreaths given to victors in Greek games. Here, it is a symbol of the reward given to the victor in the struggle with Satan.

Of life. The phrase "crown of life" is probably best translated in the sense, the "crown that is life"—the "crown" *is* "life." This crown is evidence of victory over the devil and the "tribulation" he has caused. Compare 2 Tim. 4:8.

11. He that hath an ear. See on v. 7.

He that overcometh. See on v. 7. Here, stress should probably be placed on overcoming in spite of the "tribulation" mentioned in v. 10.

Second death. As contrasted with the first death, which ends human life temporarily now, and from which there is a resurrection, both for "the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). The second death is the final extinction of sin and sinners, and from it there can be no resurrection (see on Rev. 20:14; cf. ch. 21:8).

12. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Pergamos. Or, Pergamum. This city had been the capital of the Roman province of Asia for two centuries after its last king, Attalus III, bequeathed it, together with the kingdom of Pergamum, to Rome in 133 B.C. (see p. 95). Since the early 3d century B.C. the city of Pergamum had been a chief center of cultural and intellectual life of the Hellenistic world. Although by John's time Ephesus was beginning to supersede it as the leading city of Asia, Pergamum continued to retain much of its former importance. The two cities long contended for this honor. For further information concerning the ancient city of Pergamum see p. 93; John's Literary Productions.

The meaning of the name Pergamos is uncertain, but "citadel," or "acropolis," seems to be one of its derived meanings. The characteristic experience of the church during the Pergamos period was one of exaltation. From the status of a proscribed and persecuted sect it rose to a position of unchallenged popularity and power (see on v. 13).

Sword with two edges. Like the descriptive titles that introduce the messages to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, this is drawn from the description of the glorified Christ in ch. 1:16 (see comment there and on ch. 2:1).

13. Thy works. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "thy works, and." Compare on v. 2.

Satan's seat. Pergamum had distinguished itself in 29 B.C. by becoming the site of the first cult of a living Roman emperor. A temple was built and dedicated to the joint worship of the goddess Roma (a personification of the spirit of the empire) and the emperor Augustus. At the very time John wrote these words Christians were suffering persecution for refusing to worship the emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96), who insisted on being worshiped as "lord and god." Pergamum was also the religious capital of Asia Minor. It was a center of Hellenistic (Greco-Mesopotamian) thought and emperor worship, and had many pagan temples. Its designation as the place "where Satan's seat is" was thus appropriate indeed (see p. 95).

The Pergamos period of church history may be thought of as beginning about the time of Constantine's espousal of the Christian cause, in A.D. 313, or of his supposed conversion—perhaps in 323 or 325—and ending in 538 (see Additional Note at end of chapter). It was during this time that the papacy won religious, and to some extent political, leadership of Western Europe (see Additional Note on Dan. 7), and that Satan established his "seat" within the church. The papacy was a skillful blend of paganism with Christianity. This period may be termed the Age of Popularity.

Name. See on v. 3.

My faith. That is, faith in Me. Compare the experience of the heroes of faith whose names are enshrined in Heb. 11.

Antipas. A familiar Greek name, compounded of the Greek words *anti*, "in place of," and *pas*, an abbreviated form of *patēr*, "father" (cf. on Luke 3:1; 24:18; see Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 1. 3 [10]). It reflected a father's hope that the son so named would eventually take his place in the world. Some commentators hold that a Christian by this name at Pergamum had recently been martyred for his faith, presumably for refusing to worship the emperor. If so, the experience and example of this faithful martyr may be considered as typical of that of untold thousands who suffered for their faith in later ages. Although it is possible that the name may have a figurative application to the Pergamos period of church history, Inspiration provides no apparent clue with respect to such an application.

Martyr. Gr. *martus*, "witness." A "martyr" is one whose death testifies to his faith. The Greek here rendered "faithful martyr" is identical with that used of Christ in ch. 1:5 and translated "faithful witness."

14. Thee. For the force of the singular see on v. 2.

Balaam. See Num. 22–24. The analogy with Balaam suggests that there were some at Pergamum whose purpose was to divide and ruin the church by encouraging practices that were forbidden to Christians (see below on "things sacrificed"; cf. on Acts 15:29). Balaam was concerned about advancing his own interests, not those of God's people.

Stumblingblock. Gr. *skandalon*, the trigger that springs a trap. Thus to "cast a stumblingblock" before someone is to trip him up. See on Matt. 5:29.

Things sacrificed. The two practices here mentioned had been expressly prohibited by the council at Jerusalem (see on Acts 15:29; Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 8:1). Balaam influenced Israel to commit "whoredom with the daughters of Moab," to sacrifice to Moabite gods, and to "eat," presumably of the meat sacrificed to these gods (Num. 25:1, 2, 31:16).

These two sins led to a mixture of paganism with true religion. Applied to Christian history, this portrayal is peculiarly appropriate to the situation in the church in the period following the legalization of Christianity by Constantine in A.D. 313 and his nominal conversion some 10 or 12 years later. He pursued a policy of blending paganism and Christianity at as many points as possible, in a studied attempt to unite the diverse elements within the empire and thus strengthen it. The favorable, even dominant, position he accorded the church made it a prey to the temptations that always accompany prosperity and popularity. Under Constantine and his successors, almost all of whom continued his favorable policy, the church rapidly became a politico-ecclesiastical institution and lost much of its former spirituality.

15. Nicolaitanes. See on v. 6.

16. Repent. This sharp warning reflects the grave spiritual peril that confronted the Pergamum church.

Sword of my mouth. See on ch. 1:16; cf. ch. 2:12. The sword typifies the punishment that would result from a failure to "repent."

17. Hath an ear. See on v. 7.

Him that overcometh. See on v. 7.

Hidden manna. See Ex. 16:14–36. Some think the allusion here may be to the manna Aaron placed in a pot and preserved in the ark (Ex. 16:33; Heb. 9:4). An ancient Jewish teaching declares that when the Messiah would come, "the treasury of manna shall again descend from on high, and they will eat of it in those years" (2 Baruch 29:8; R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 498). In view of John 6:31–34 it seems that John here intends manna to be symbolic of spiritual life in Christ now, and eternal life in the hereafter (see on John 6:32, 33).

White stone. Various ancient customs have been suggested as providing a basis for this allusion to the gift of a white stone, but none of these is altogether satisfactory. One of the more common ancient customs was that of the use of a white and a black stone by jurors to determine acquittal or conviction. All that may be said with reasonable certainty is that John doubtless refers to some ceremony involving the bestowal of a special gift or honor.

New name. In the Bible a person's name often stands for his character, and a new name would indicate a new character. The new is not patterned after the old, but replaces it and is different from it. Here the Christian is promised a "new name," that is, a new and different character, patterned after that of God (cf. Isa. 62:2; 65:15; Rev. 3:12).

No man knoweth. The experience of spiritual rebirth, of the transformation of character, can be understood only by personal experience. Attempts to explain this experience to a man who himself has not been born again can never convey a true or complete picture of it (cf. John 3:5–8).

18. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Thyatira. The origin and meaning of this name are uncertain. Some have suggested that Thyatira means "sweet savor of labor," perhaps on the basis of the "works" of the church set forth in v. 19. Although less notable than the other six cities, ancient Thyatira was nevertheless distinguished by the number and variety of trades and crafts that flourished there. Apparently, prominent among these was that of the dyeing of cloth (see Acts 16:14). The Christians of Thyatira doubtless found employment largely in the local

crafts. For further information concerning the ancient city of Thyatira see p. 96; John's Literary Productions.

As applied to Christian history, the message to Thyatira is particularly appropriate to the experience of the true church in the Dark Ages and the later Middle Ages (see Additional Note on ch. 2).

Trends that began in earlier periods became dominant during the Dark Ages. The Scriptures not being available to the ordinary Christian, tradition was exalted in their place. Works came to be considered a means of attaining salvation. An earthly and human priesthood obscured the true and divine priesthood of Jesus Christ. See Additional Note on Dan. 7. It was a time of great difficulty for those who resisted the great apostasy, and the Thyatira period of church history may well be called the Age of Adversity. Because of persecution, the flame of truth flickered and nearly went out. The spiritual message of the Reformation was essentially a restoration of the great truths of the gospel. It proclaimed that men are saved only by faith in Christ, that their only standard of faith and practice is Scripture, and that every man may appear on his own behalf before the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, without a human intercessor.

Son of God. See on Luke 1:35; John 1:14. This title, like those that introduce the messages to the other churches, is drawn from the description of the glorified Christ in Rev. 1:13 (see on ch. 2:1). Here the definite article is used, thus specifically identifying the Author of the message as the second person of the Godhead (cf. on ch. 1:13).

Eyes … feet. See on ch. 1:14, 15.

19. Thy. For the force of the singular see on v. 2.

Works. See on v. 2.

Charity. Gr. *agapē*, "love" (see on Matt. 5:43, 44). Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the sequence "love, and faith, and service, and patience." These are an enumeration of the "works" of the church at Thyatira, love and faith providing the inner basis for the outward expression of service and patience.

Service. Gr. *diakonia*, "service," or "ministry" (see on Rom. 12:7).

Faith. Gr. *pistis* (see on Rom. 3:3).

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē* (see on ch. 1:9).

The last. That is, the last more than the first works, as the Greek indicates. The message to Thyatira is the only one of the seven that contains a recognition of improvement. In spite of difficulties at Thyatira, the church there experienced spiritual growth. Contrast the opposite experience at Ephesus (vs. 4, 5).

20. A few things. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase. However, some ancient manuscripts read "much" or "many things." The simple reading, "I have [it] against thee" (cf. v. 4), is to be preferred.

Sufferest. Gr. *aphiēmi*, "to permit," "to allow to operate." The church was at fault not only because many openly submitted to apostasy but also because no earnest effort was being made to check the course of evil.

Jezebel. For the account of the historical Jezebel see 1 Kings 16:31; 18:13; 19:1, 2; 21:5–16, 23–25; 2 Kings 9:30–37. It would appear that, as Jezebel sponsored the worship of Baal in Israel (1 Kings 21:25), so in John's day some false prophetess was attempting to lead astray the church at Thyatira. The message indicates that here, even more than at

Pergamum (Rev. 2:14), apostasy was openly and defiantly rampant. As applied to the Thyatira period of Christian history, the figure of Jezebel represents the power that produced the great apostasy of the medieval centuries (see Additional Note on Dan. 7; see on Rev. 2:18; cf. Rev. 17).

Commit fornication … eat things sacrificed. See on Rev. 2:14; cf. 2 Kings 9:22. This doubtless had, first, a local application to the church at Thyatira. Applied to the Thyatira period of church history, this would represent an admixture of paganism with Christianity (see on Eze. 16:15; Rev. 17:1). This process was accelerated greatly under Constantine and his successors. Medieval Christianity absorbed, to a great extent, pagan forms and practices.

21. Space. The offer of forgiveness was extended to the unrepentant prophetess for some considerable time.

Repented not. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "is not willing to repent," meaning that she refuses to do so. Here was no case of unenlightened, nor even of willful ignorance, but of insistent and defiant rebellion.

22. Cast her into a bed. The manner of punishment to be meted out to the false prophetess will be appropriate to her crime. This expression seems to be of Semitic origin, and is used with respect to falling ill (see Ex. 21:18; Judith 8:3, LXX; Matt. 9:2, literally, "a paralytic cast upon a bed"). Compare the English expression "to take to one's bed." See on Rev. 17:16, 17; 18.

Them that commit. These persons are not identified. Compare on ch. 17:1, 2.

Except they repent. The door of mercy had not yet fully shut. God never shuts Himself off from sinners; it is they who shut themselves off from Him.

Their deeds. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "her deeds." From the standpoint of God speaking to His church, the sins of Jezebel and her lovers are essentially her sins, for it is she who as a prophetess, aspires to lead the church.

23. Children. The fornication of this Jezebel was habitual and of long standing, for she had children. Figuratively, this should probably be understood in the sense that she had won committed adherents. Judgment was to descend not only upon the mother but also upon the offspring, who were contaminated by her evil character. Compare the destruction of the children of Ahab (2 Kings 10:7).

Death. John may have in mind the LXX of Eze. 33:27, where the significant passage reads "And those in the caves I will kill with death." Instead of "death" the Hebrew reads "pestilence," or "plague." Possibly this is the meaning of "death" in John's passage.

Reins. That is, the kidneys, which anciently were thought to be the seat of the will and the affections (cf. on Ps. 7:9.)

Hearts. That is, minds, meaning the intellect. Christ penetrates both the thoughts and the emotions. Christ's judgment is just because He sees and takes into consideration the secrets of the heart. See Ps. 7:9; Jer. 11:20; see on 1 Sam. 16:7.

24. The rest. That is, the loyal believers in Thyatira. Historically, this refers to small groups throughout the Middle Ages that sought to remain loyal to apostolic Christianity. Such movements were found both within and without the formal framework of the Catholic Church. Particularly important were such groups as the Waldenses on the continent of Europe and the followers of Wyclif in England. Neither of these groups had the measure of evangelical truth that was proclaimed later in the Protestant Reformation,

but the message "unto the rest in Thyatira" was appropriate to them. Upon them God put no further burden than to be faithful to the light that was theirs.

This doctrine. That is, the teachings of Jezebel (see on v. 20).

Depths. Literally, "deeps," meaning "deep things." Christ takes the very words the apostates proudly apply to their own teachings ("as they speak"), and devastatingly terms them "the deep things of Satan." The Gnostics claimed to be the only ones who knew "the deep things" (see Vol. VI, pp. 54–58).

None other burden. Faithfulness to the light that was theirs would be sufficient.

25. Till I come. The "blessed hope" (see Titus 2:13) of the soon coming of Christ has ever been the stay of Christians in affliction. Christ does not necessarily imply that He would return within the lifetime of the members of the literal Thyatira church, nor even within the Thyatira period of church history. However, see on ch. 1:1.

26. He that overcometh. See on v. 7.

My works. That is, works that reflect the character of Christ. These are in striking contrast with the "deeds" of those who ally themselves with Jezebel (see on v. 22).

Power over the nations. Compare on ch. 20:4.

27. Rule. Gr. *poimainō*, literally, "to shepherd," and thus "to rule" (see on Matt. 2:6). The passage is quoted from Ps. 2:9. For the time, circumstances, and nature of Christ's breaking the nations with a "rod of iron" see on Rev. 19:15. That the Jews considered Ps. 2:9 a Messianic prediction is evident from the pseudepigraphical Psalms of Solomon 17:26 (Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 649): "He [Messiah, Son of David] shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance, He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter's vessel. With a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance." Inasmuch as the redeemed will live and reign *with* Christ they are here represented as sharing Christ's work (see on Rev. 12:5; 20:4).

Rod. The word used here represents the Heb. *shebet* of Ps. 2:9, which may mean a shepherd's rod (Ps. 23:4), or a scepter (Ps. 45:6), or a rod of punishment (Ps. 125:3). The context of Rev. 2:27 suggests that the "rod" is here both a symbol of rulership and an instrument of punishment.

Vessels of a potter. See Jer. 19:1, 10, 11.

Broken. The rule here spoken of results in a destruction of the wicked. For the nature of this rule see on ch. 20:4.

To shivers. Or, "to pieces."

As I received. See Matt. 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35; 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31; Vol. V, p. 919.

28. Morning star. That is, Christ Himself (see Rev. 22:16; cf. 2 Peter 1:19).

29. Hath an ear. See on v. 7.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 2

The application of the various messages to the seven churches to seven consecutive periods of church history (see on ch. 2:1) naturally suggests the utility of a series of transition dates to facilitate the coordination of the several messages with their respective historical periods. In attempting to assign such dates, however, it is well to remember that: (1) The prophecy of the seven churches is not a time prophecy in the usual sense of the term, for no specific chronological data accompany it. It is concerned primarily with successive experiences of the church, and differs considerably from such prophecies as

those concerning the 1260 days of Dan. 7:25, the 2300 days of ch. 8:14, and the 70 weeks of ch. 9:25. (2) Major eras of history can hardly be marked off by exact dates. So used, dates are at best convenient landmarks of a rather general sort, not exact boundary markers. Actual transition from one period to another is a gradual process. Nevertheless it is well to select approximate dates as an aid to correlating the messages with the corresponding events of history. Some would suggest different dates from those given below and use different phrases to describe the various periods. However, these variations in dates and names do not materially affect the over-all message found in the letters to the seven churches.

1. *Ephesus*. There is general agreement that the period thus represented spans the apostolic age, and may, accordingly, be dated approximately from A.D. 31, the year of our Lord's ascension (see Vol. V, pp. 257–260), to A.D. 100.

2. *Smyrna*. For A.D. 100 as marking the beginning of this period see the foregoing on "Ephesus." The messages to the second and third churches identify the transition from Smyrna to Pergamum as one from persecution to popularity. The reign of Constantine the Great, 306–337, the first so-called Christian emperor of Rome, marks such a transition. Prior to his famous Edict of Milan in 313, Christianity was an illegal religion and experienced repeated periods of severe persecution by the state (see Vol. VI, pp. 47, 61; Vol. VII, pp. 18, 19). That edict decreed equal rights for all religions throughout the empire and restored confiscated Christian property. In the same year Constantine exempted the Christian clergy from civil and military service, and their property from taxation. Either this date, 313, or that of his supposed conversion to Christianity, commonly given as 323 or 325, might be taken as an appropriate year to mark the transition from the Smyrna period to that of Pergamum.

3. *Pergamos*. For the transition to the Pergamos period see the foregoing on "Smyrna." Inspiration has characterized the Pergamos period as a time of compromise, apostasy, and popularity, the time during which the Church of Rome was consolidating its power and authority. Accordingly, the close of the Pergamos period should find imperial Rome out of the way and the papacy fully formed and ready to embark on its career as ruler of Western Christendom (see Additional Note on Dan. 7).

Any one of various events might serve as an acceptable boundary marker for the close of this period. The deposition of the last Roman emperor in 476 marks it as one such date. The conversion, in 496, of the Frankish king Clovis, the first Germanic ruler to embrace Roman Christianity and to ally himself with the interests of the church in the conquest of other Germanic peoples, is another. In 538 Justinian's decree of 533, according the pope plenary ecclesiastical power in East and West, began to become effective.

Historians generally take the pontificate of Gregory the Great (590–604) as marking the transition from ancient to medieval times, and his reign as pope might be considered another such boundary marker. Gregory is considered the first of the medieval prelates. He boldly assumed, in many ways, the role of emperor in the West, and his administration laid the foundation for later claims to papal absolutism.

The year 756 marks the beginning of papal territorial rule and the accession of France to the role of so-called "eldest son of the papacy" (see Vol. 4, pp. 837). In that year Pepin of France subdued the Lombards of northern Italy, who had been threatening the pope, and ceded their territory to him. This grant, commonly called the Donation of Pepin,

marks the beginning of the Papal States, which the pope governed as an absolute monarch for more than 1,000 years.

However, the importance of 538 as the starting point of the 1,260 years (see on Dan. 7:25) suggests it as a more appropriate terminal date for the Pergamos period than any of the others. See pp. 18–22.

4. *Thyatira.* For 538 as a beginning date for the Thyatira period see above on "Pergamos." The Thyatira period is characterized as the era of papal supremacy. The importance of the 1,260-year period in Bible prophecy (see on Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:6) suggests that 1798 might well be selected as the terminal date for Thyatira. But in view of the importance of the Reformation in breaking papal supremacy, the date 1517 would also be an appropriate terminal date (see Vol. IV, p. 837; Vol. VII, p. 50). Some might hold that the loss of the Papal States in 1870 and the consequent self-imposed status of the pope as "prisoner of the Vatican" would, similarly, make that year eligible for consideration. However, the year 1870 seems to be somewhat too late to comport with either the 1,260 years of prophecy or with the remaining periods of church history as delineated in Rev. 2 and 3.

5. *Sardis.* Characteristically, this is the church of Reformation times, and as such may be thought of as beginning in 1517, or possibly 1798 (see the foregoing on "Thyatira"). Those who propose 1798 as the terminal date for the Thyatira church period and the opening of the Sardis period suggest 1833 as an appropriate year marking the close of the latter. For reasons set forth below on "Philadelphia," others suggest 1755 as an appropriate terminal date.

6. *Philadelphia.* Inspiration has presented this as the church of the great second advent awakening. Various beginning dates have been suggested as appropriate for this period. Some propose 1833, the year of the great climactic sing in nature foretold by our Lord (see on Matt. 24:33). This point of time was closely connected with the early proclamation of the advent message by William Miller. Others suggest 1798, the beginning of the "time of the end" of the Dan. 11:35 (see comment there), which would also be acceptable. Still others favor the date 1755, which is commonly accepted as marking the first of the specific signs of the end under the sixth seal (see on Rev. 6:12), considering that this choice comports well with the character of the Philadelphia church as the church of the advent awakening. There is general agreement among Seventh-day Adventist expositors that the year 1844 should be considered as marking the close of the Philadelphia period and the opening of the Laodicean period (see on Dan. 8:14).

7. *Laodicea.* For the year 1844 as marking the beginning of this period see the foregoing on "Philadelphia." Being the last of the seven, the Laodicean period continues till the end of time.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 586; 5T 435; 6T 413, 418; 8T 23
1, 2 5T 435
1–56T 422; 8T 98
2, 3 AA 578; 5T 538; WM 155
4 MM 37; 2T 293; 8T 26; WM 79
4, 5 AA 587; DA 280; LS 320; PP 165; TM 168, 275, 352, 461; 6T 368, 421; 8T 299
5 TM 450; 2T 296; 4T 286, 403; 5T 191, 612; 6T 426; 8T 80, 248
7 AA 589; Ed 302; EW 21, 77; LS 91; MH 449; PP 62; 6T 76; 8T 289

9 Ev 603; TM 16; 6T 475
10 AA 588; Ev 353; EW 288; GC 41; PK 84; 4T 300; 5T 71
17 GC 646; MH 516; ML 516; MYP 95; PP 297
26, 28 MH 516

CHAPTER 3

2 *The angel of the church of Sardis is reproved,* 3 *exhorted to repent, and threatened if he do not repent*. 8 *The angel of the church of Philadelphia* 10 *is approved for his diligence and patience*. 15 *The angel of Laodicea rebuked, for being neither hot nor cold,* 19 *and admonished to be more zealous*. 20 *Christ standeth at the door and knocketh*.

1. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Sardis. The first important city on the highway south of Thyatira. Like Thyatira, Sardis enjoyed a favorable commercial location. Strabo, the ancient geographer, speaks of it as "a great city" (*Geography* xiii. 4. 5; Loeb ed., vol. 6, p. 171), although in John's day it did not rival either Ephesus or Pergamum in importance. For further information about Sardis see pp. 97–99. The meaning of the name is uncertain; however, some suggest "song of joy," or "that which remains," or "something new."

Seven Spirits. See on ch. 1:4.

Seven stars. This figure, like those that introduce the messages to each of the other churches, is drawn from the description of the glorified Christ found in ch. 1 (see on vs. 16, 20).

Thy works. See on ch. 2:2.

Name. Here, "reputation." Hypocrisy characterized this church, which was not what it pretended to be. Professedly, the Reformation churches had discovered what it means to live by faith in Jesus Christ, but for the most part they eventually lapsed into a state resembling, in certain ways, that of the organization from which they had withdrawn (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5). Their name—Protestant—implied opposition to the abuses, errors, and formalism of the Roman Catholic Church, and the name Reformation implied that none of these faults were to be found within the Protestant fold. See pp. 41–65.

Art dead. This bitter comment begins a message that consists mostly of reproof. The sin of hypocrisy called forth Jesus' most scathing denunciations against the religious leaders of His day (see Matt. 23:13–33). Now, to the hypocritical church of Sardis, the glorified Christ sends His most unqualified rebuke. Rather than being "quickened," or made alive in Christ (see Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; Gal. 2:20), as this church claimed to be, in reality it was "dead" (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5). As applied to the Sardis period of the church, the message may be considered in terms of the church toward the close of the Reformation period and may be dated 1517 to 1755; however, see Additional Note on Rev. 2.

Some decades after the beginning of the Reformation the new churches experienced a period of violent doctrinal controversy. Eventually, differences of opinion were settled by the adoption of definitive creeds that tended to discourage the search for for additional truth. By a similar process the Roman Catholic Church, in the early centuries of its history, had crystallized much of its theology. Protected by the power and prestige of the state, and ensconced within the shelter of rigid creedal confessions, the national churches of the Protestant world generally came to content themselves with the form of godliness without its power. Another important factor that contributed to apathy toward spiritual things was the rise of rationalism in the 17th and 18th centuries. Under the impact of scientific discovery, many scholars came to believe that natural law was sufficient to

account for the workings of the universe. Often they concluded that God's chief function in relation to this world is only that of a first cause, and that since His initial act of creation, the world has functioned more or less independently of Him. Thinking men who found the avenues of independent theological thought closed to them by the rigid formulas of Protestant orthodoxy turned, in some instances, to the new philosophical rationalism. Although rationalism produced much high idealism and commendable thinking in such fields as political science and humanitarianism, its presuppositions when applied to religion went far to encourage the spiritual coldness that characterized much of Protestantism in the centuries following the Reformation.

2. Be watchful. Concerning watchfulness as a Christian duty see on Matt. 24:42; cf. Matt. 25:13.

Things which remain. Even in degenerate Protestantism there were certain things worth laboring to preserve. Much, but not all, had been lost. The spiritual life of Protestantism was dying, but the system was not yet dead. "Survival" may be thought of as the keynote of the Sardis period of church history.

Thy works perfect. The ardor of Protestantism during its early years gave promise of a pressing forward toward perfection in understanding revealed truth and in applying it to the life. But as the years went by zeal and piety waned, and the church wearied of the effort to reach the goal it had set out to attain.

3. Remember therefore. Compare ch. 2:5.

Hast received. The form of the Greek verb implies not only that the church at Sardis had received the truth but that she still had it—not all had been lost. That there still was hope is further indicated by the injunction to "hold fast," which in the Greek means to "continue to hold fast." Some Christians at Sardis had not back-slidden, a fact stated more clearly in v. 4.

Repent. Gr. *metanoeō* (see on Matt. 3:2).

Thief. Compare Matt. 24:43, where the reference is to the second coming of Christ. Here, the warning may include not only the second advent itself but a more immediate divine visitation (cf. Rev. 2:5). Either coming would be unexpected to those who failed to repent and to watch. Compare GC 490.

4. Names. That is, persons (see on Acts 1:15).

Defiled their garments. A figure for moral defilement, into which most of the church at Sardis had fallen. See on Matt. 22:11; cf. Rev. 16:15; cf. on Isa. 63:6.

In white. In contrast with those who have fallen morally, so defiling their "garments," those who have been true wear "white," or clean and unstained, garments, a symbol of their purity. This is indicated both by the succeeding remark, "for they are worthy," and by the use of the same symbol in ch. 7:13, 14. The latter passage makes clear that such righteousness is not their own, but the result of washing their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. They have received the righteousness of Christ.

White garments are also pictured as worn by the inhabitants of heaven (see Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:4; 6:11; 19:14), and thus, for the saints, figurative of their "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:40–44; cf. vs. 51–54).

5. He that overcometh. See on ch. 2:7.

Clothed. That is, with immortality in the life to come.

White raiment. See on v. 4.

Blot out. See on Acts 3:19. The figurative phrase "not blot out" assures the repentant sinner that his sins have been forgiven, and warns the unrepentant that his name will be removed from the book of life. His very identity as a person will cease to exist; he will no longer have a place among created beings. Compare GC 490.

Book of life. See on Phil. 4:3; cf. Rev. 13:8; 20:15.

Confess his name. That is, acknowledge him as a loyal, devoted follower. Christ is the advocate and intercessor, the great high priest of all who claim His righteousness (see 1 John 2:1, 2; cf. Matt. 10:32, 33; Heb. 8:1–6).

Before his angels. The "broader and deeper purpose" of the plan of redemption is "to vindicate the character of God before the universe" (PP 68; cf. DA 19). When Christ in His role as intercessor and high priest presents His ransomed people before the throne of God, He thereby provides the angelic hosts with a convincing testimony that the ways of God are just and true. They see the righteousness of God vindicated, alike in His "strange act" (Isa. 28:21) of committing the unrepentant to destruction and in His pardon of sinners who accept His saving grace by faith. Without the high priestly intercession of Christ, such otherwise mysterious acts of God might appear to the intelligences of the universe as arbitrary and unjustified.

6. Hath an ear. See on ch. 2:7.

7. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

Philadelphia. A word meaning "brotherly love." This city was founded before 138 B.C. and was named for Attalus II Philadelphus of Pergamum in honor of his loyalty to his elder brother, Eumenes II, who had preceded him on the throne. After a damaging earthquake in A.D. 17 it was rebuilt by the Roman emperor Tiberius, but remained comparatively small. It was situated some 30 mi. (c. 48 km.) east-southeast of Sardis.

When the historical application is made, the message to Philadelphia may be thought of as appropriate to the various movements within Protestantism during the latter years of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th whose objective it was to make religion a vital, personal affair (see on v. 2; see Additional Note on Chapter 2). In a special way the great evangelical and advent movements in Europe and the United States restored the spirit of brotherly love and stressed practical godliness in contrast with the forms of religion. Revived faith in the saving grace of Christ and in the nearness of His return resulted in a deeper spirit of Christian fellowship than the church had experienced since the early days of the Reformation. For further comment on the background of this period see pp. 67–70.

He that is holy. This title is equivalent to "the Holy One," used of God in the OT (Isa. 40:25; Hab. 3:3). In the NT a similar ascription is applied repeatedly to Christ, implying His deity (see Luke 1:35; Acts 4:27, 30, cf. on John 6:69).

True. Gr. *alēthinos*, "genuine," "real," in contrast with false gods.

Key of David. This verse applies Isaiah's prophecy concerning Eliakim, to Christ (Isa. 22:20–22; see 2 Kings 18:18). Eliakim was appointed to have supervision "over the household" of David, as signified by the fact that he was to be given "the key of the house of David." Christ's possession of the "key" represents His jurisdiction over the church and over the divine purpose to be achieved through it (see Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22). Compare Rev. 5:5; 22:16; see on Matt. 1:1.

He that openeth. That is, with "the key of David." Christ has full authority to open and to shut, to carry the plan of redemption forward to success.

8. Thy. For the force of the singular see on ch. 2:2.

Works. See on ch. 2:2.

An open door. In the preceding verse Christ is said to have the "key of David." Verse 8 may imply that with the "key" He now opens before the Philadelphia church a "door" of unlimited opportunity for personal victory in the struggle with sin, and for bearing witness to the saving truth of the gospel. For similar uses of a "door" as a symbol of opportunity see Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3.

Seventh-day Adventists hold that the close of the Philadelphia period (1844) marks the beginning of the investigative judgment described in Dan. 7:10; Rev. 14:6, 7 (see comment there). Christ is our great high priest (Heb. 4:14, 15; 8:1), ministering in the sanctuary above, "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2, 6; cf. Ex. 25:8, 9). Now, the ritual of the earthly sanctuary consisted essentially of two parts, the daily service of ministration for sin, in the holy place, and the yearly service, on the Day of Atonement, which was considered a day of judgment, in the most holy place (see Heb. 9:1, 6, 7; see on Dan. 8:11, 14). In view of the fact that the earthly sanctuary served as an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5) it is proper to conclude that the daily and yearly services of the earthly sanctuary have their counterpart in the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. To speak in terms of the symbolism of the earthly sanctuary, which was "a copy of the true one" (Heb. 9:24, RSV): On the antitypical day of atonement, beginning in 1844, our great High Priest may be thought of as leaving the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and entering the most holy place. Accordingly, the "shut door" would be that of the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and the "open door" that of the most holy place, where Christ has been engaged in the work of the great antitypical day of atonement since that time (see GC 430, 431, 435; EW 42). In other words, the "shut door" indicates the closing of the first phase of Christ's heavenly ministry, and the "open door," the beginning of the second phase. For a discussion of the "shut door" in early Adventist teaching see L. E. Froom. *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers,* Vol. 4, pp. 829–842; also "Open and Shut Door," in *SDA Encyclopedia,* pp. 1034–1037. For a summary of the sanctuary doctrine see Additional Note on Heb. 10.

No man can shut. Christ will carry forward the work of redemption until it is complete. Man can do nothing to hinder either His ministry in the courts of heaven or His jurisdiction and control over the affairs of earth (see on Dan. 4:17).

A little strength. Or, simply, "little strength." It is not clear whether Christ is here reproving the Philadelphia church for having so *little* strength or commending them for having *some* strength. Except for a "few" in Sardis, that church was all but "dead," and it may be that the "little strength" of Philadelphia represents a more encouraging situation than that in Sardis. The fact that the "little strength" is so closely connected with the commendation for heeding Christ's Word and not denying His name tends to confirm this conclusion. Also, the "open door" may be thought of as an invitation to enter into an experience of even greater strength. The church at ancient Philadelphia was apparently neither large nor influential, but it was pure and faithful. The Philadelphia period of church history, with its increased attention to God's Word, particularly the prophecies of Daniel and of the Revelation, and to personal godliness, represented a much more encouraging picture than the preceding period.

My word. God's word expresses His will. God has revealed His will through nature, also through His prophets and apostles, by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit to the human heart, through the experiences of life, through the course of human history, and pre-eminently through Christ.

Name. See on ch. 2:3.

9. Make them. Literally, "give them." Grammatically, the statement of v. 9 may be understood to mean either that God would "make," or "cause," members of "the synagogue of Satan" to "come and worship" at the feet of the Philadelphia Christians, unrepentantly, or that God would "give" to the Philadelphia Christians some of the Jews of Philadelphia as converts to Christianity. The context is not decisive.

Of the synagogue. Or, "some of the synagogue" (see on ch. 2:9).

Say they are Jews. See on ch. 2:9.

Come and worship. The sequence of the thought—"come," "worship," "know"—seems to imply more than that the Christians of ancient Philadelphia would ultimately triumph publicly over their Jewish opponents. For Christians, like pagan conquerors, to rejoice at the prospect of their accusers finally lying prostrate before their feet hardly seems to reflect the spirit of true Christianity. Rather, these words may refer to the conversion of some of the Jews of Philadelphia (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24, 25) who would learn of God's love by personal experience. Such a growth in membership may result from the "open door" of Rev. 3:8 and the loyalty of the church to Christ's "word." Such loyalty has often brought conviction even to the hearts of persecutors themselves.

Applied to the Philadelphia period of church history, this expression may be considered as applicable to those who do not keep pace with advancing truth and who oppose Christians who do. Thus understood, reference may be to the time when those who have rejected truth publicly confess their error (see GC 655).

The words "come and worship before thy feet" are from the LXX of Isa. 60:14 (cf. ch. 49:23). As strangers were to have come to literal Israel of old to learn of God (see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30), so non-Christians were to come to the light of the gospel and find salvation (see Vol. IV, pp. 35, 36).

Rev. 3:9 has also been applied to those who persist in their opposition to truth, particularly to the time when circumstances will compel them, though unrepentant, to acknowledge that those who have been loyal to truth are indeed God's people. There is nothing to preclude the possibility that the statement of this verse may include both the repentant and unrepentant opponents of truth, with the one group making the acknowledgement in sincerity and the other only because circumstances compel them to do so.

I have loved. These words are probably taken from Isa. 43:4.

10. Word of my patience. Some interpret this phrase to mean, "my word of patience," that is, my injunction to be patient; others, as the teaching concerning the patience of Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 3:5). The two ideas are combined in the thought, "Christ encourages us to be patient as He was patient under trial."

From. Gr. *ek*, "out of," indicating that the overcomers will successfully endure the period of tribulation, not that they will be untouched by it (see on Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22, 29–31).

Hour of temptation. Here not a specific length of time, whether literal or prophetic, but a "season," or "time." "Hour" is here used in the same sense as in ch. 3:3. In harmony

with the repeated references in the Revelation to the imminence of Christ's return (see on ch. 1:1), the "hour of temptation" doubtless refers to a great time of testing preceding the second advent.

Them that dwell. This and similar expressions (chs. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:2, 8) are used consistently throughout the Revelation to refer to the unrighteous, upon whom the divine judgments will be poured out.

11. Crown. See on ch. 2:10.

12. A pillar in the temple. A metaphorical "pillar" would, of course, be part of a metaphorical "temple." In the NT the word translated "temple" (*naos*) generally refers to the inner sanctuary containing the holy and most holy places, not to the whole complex of buildings that constituted the ancient Temple. Accordingly, this promise would mean that the overcomer will hold a permanent, important place in the very presence of God. For similar metaphorical usage of the word "pillar" see Gal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:15.

Go no more out. That is, be permanent. In harmony with the figure, to "go … out" would be to leave the presence of God, deliberately, as Lucifer did (PP 37). Such a promise as this could be made only to those who overcome, permanently. In this life the possibility of going "out" remains, but in the future life no one will choose to go out.

Name of my God. See on Acts 3:16; Rev. 2:3; cf. Rev. 2:17; 14:1; 22:4. This continues the figure of speech introduced by the pillar, and is therefore also to be taken figuratively. Inasmuch as a "name" implies personality and character, the promise here is that those who overcome will receive the permanent impress of God's character; the image of their Creator will be fully restored in them. This figure of speech may also be understood to imply that the victorious saints will be completely God's own, as attested by His name, or sign of ownership, thus affixed upon them.

Name of the city. The pillar not only has the divine name inscribed upon it, but also bears the name of the New Jerusalem. This may be taken to signify that the victorious Christian is a citizen of the New Jerusalem and has a right to reside there (ch. 22:14).

New Jerusalem. Not "new" in the sense of being a replica of the literal city by the same name, but in supernal contrast with its earthly counterpart. Ancient Jerusalem was to have become the metropolis of this earth and to have stood forever (see Vol. IV, pp. 29, 30), but because of its failure to carry out its assigned task that role will be accorded the New Jerusalem. The term New Jerusalem is limited to the Revelation, but the thought is anticipated in Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22. For the meaning of the name Jerusalem see on Joshua 10:1.

Cometh down. See on ch. 21:2.

My new name. The third name written on the symbolic pillar is that of Christ Himself. The overcomer's reception of the divine character, represented by the name (see on Acts 3:16), is mediated by Christ. It is only by virtue of the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ that man may once more be restored to the image of God. This is accomplished by the gift of the life and character of Christ to the believer (see Gal. 2:20; DA 388). To receive Christ's name is also to receive confirmation of His ownership (see on 2 Cor. 1:22).

13. Hath an ear. See on ch. 2:7.

14. Angel. See on ch. 1:20.

The Laodiceans. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "in Laodicea." This name has been defined as meaning "judging the people," or "a people adjudged." The

latter appears preferable here. The beeline distance from Philadelphia to the city of Laodicea is some 50 mi. (c. 80 km.) (see The Journeys of Paul). The latter was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II Theos (261–246 B.C.), and named in honor of his wife, Laodice. Situated in the valley of the Lycus River, Laodicea was a prosperous commercial center in John's day, specializing in the production of woolen goods. It lay within a few miles of the cities of Colossae and Hierapolis, and at an early date there were Christians in each of these cities (see Col. 4:13). By the time the Revelation was written, the church at Laodicea had probably been in existence some 40 years. Paul took a distinct interest in this congregation and directed the Colossians to exchange epistles with the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16; see Vol. V, p. 183). For a discussion of the ancient city of Laodicea see p. 100.

Amen. The coupling of this title with "the faithful and true witness" identifies it as a title of Christ (see ch. 1:5), who is the author of the epistles to the seven churches. For comment on the meaning of "amen" see on Deut. 7:9; Matt. 5:18. The application of this term to Christ may be compared with Isa. 65:16, where, in Hebrew, the Lord is called *'Elohe 'amen*, "the God of amen." In the present passage this title may be understood as a declaration that Christ is truth (see John 14:6). Accordingly, His message to the Laodicean church is to be accepted without question.

Faithful and true witness. See on ch. 1:5.

Beginning. Gr. *archē*, a word that has both a passive and an active sense. Taken passively, it refers to that which is acted upon at the beginning. So interpreted here, it would mean that Christ was the first creature created. But this obviously could not be the correct translation, for Christ is not a created being. Taken actively, *archē* refers to that which initiates an action, a first cause, a prime mover. So understood here, it declares Christ to be the Creator. Such is plainly the meaning of the present passage, for Christ is portrayed repeatedly in this same role elsewhere in the NT (see Vol. V, p. 917; see on John 1:3; Heb. 1:2). The strikingly similar statement of Col. 1:15, 16 had been read by the Laodicean church many years before (cf. Col. 4:16).

15. Thy. For the force of the singular see on ch. 2:2.

Works. See on ch. 2:2.

Neither cold nor hot. It has been suggested that this figurative expression must have been particularly meaningful to the Christians at Laodicea. One of the chief landmarks of that vicinity was a waterfall over which a stream from the hot springs at Hierapolis flowed, leaving mineral deposits. Laodicea's water source was not these hot springs or a cold one, but a water tower filled by an aqueduct that shows deposits from similar mineral water, probably warm. Lukewarm water was thus a familiar phenomenon to the Laodiceans, and fittingly characterized their spiritual condition.

The tepid spiritual condition of the Laodicean church was more dangerous than if the church had been cold. Lukewarm Christianity preserves enough of the form, and even of the content of the gospel, to dull the perceptive powers of the spirit and renders men oblivious to the earnest effort necessary to the attainment of the high ideal of a victorious life in Christ. The typical Laodicean Christian is content with things as they are and proud of the little progress he has made. It is almost impossible to convince him of his great need and of how far he is from the goal of perfection.

Since the messages to the seven churches reflect the entire course of the history of the Christian church (see on chs. 1:11; 2:1), the seventh message must represent the experience of the church during the closing period of earth's history. The name Laodicea implies the final step in the Christian process of history, that of perfecting "a people adjudged" (see on ch. 3:14) righteous. Further, it implies that the preparation of such a people and the divine process of adjudging them righteous will be achieved by the close of the period (see on Dan. 8:13, 14; Rev. 3:8; 14:6, 7). Appropriately, then, the Laodicean message may be thought of as applying in a special sense to the church from 1844 to the close of time (see Additional Note at end of the chapter), and the period of time thus represented may be characterized as the Age of Judgment.

The Laodicean message is applicable to all who profess to be Christians (see 6T 77). For more than a century Seventh-day Adventists have recognized that the message to the Laodiceans also has a special application to themselves (see James White, RH Oct. 16, 1856; cf. 1T 141–144). A recognition of this application stands as a constant rebuke to self-satisfaction and an encouragement to live wholeheartedly according to the pattern of a of perfect life in Christ Jesus (see on ch. 3:18).

I would. A lukewarm spiritual state results in decreased alertness, a slow response, and indecisive action. If the Laodicean church were cold, the Spirit of God might the more readily convince it of its dangerous condition.

The following statement throws light on why a "cold" condition is preferable to a "lukewarm" one. "It would be more pleasing to the Lord if lukewarm professors of religion had never named His name. They are a continual weight to those who would be faithful followers of Jesus. They are a stumbling block to unbelievers" (1T 188).

16. Neither cold nor hot. See on v. 15; cf. 1T 188; 2T 175, 176.

Spue thee out. The figure of tepid water is pressed to its logical conclusion. Such water is disappointing and nauseating, and the one who drinks it almost involuntarily expels it. See 6T 408.

17. I am rich. This may be understood both literally and spiritually. Laodicea was a prosperous town, and doubtless some of the Christians there were well to do. Apparently this church had suffered no serious persecution. Pride in its prosperity led naturally to spiritual complacency. Of itself wealth is not wrong. However, the possession of wealth subjects its possessor to temptations to pride and self-complacency, and against these his only protection is spiritual humility.

Christians who are poor in earthly possessions feel themselves rich and increased with spiritual goods, yet are like the ancient philosopher who proudly proclaimed his "humility" by wearing a torn and threadbare robe. The pride they take in their assumed spirituality shines forth through the holes in their garments. The possession of important truths held only on the level of intellectual acceptance but not allowed to permeate the soul, leads to spiritual pride and religious bigotry. Even the church of God, strong in the structure of its organization and rich with jewels of truth, can easily become a doctrinal bigot and immorally proud of its riches of truth. "The sin that is most nearly hopeless and incurable is pride of opinion, self-conceit. This stands in the way of all growth" (7T 199, 200). Humility of mind is fully as important in God's sight as humility of heart.

Increased with goods. Literally, "have become rich," "have prospered" (RSV). Not only does the Laodicean church claim to be rich, but she also makes the fatal mistake of considering that these riches are the result of her own labors (cf. Hosea 12:8).

Need of nothing. The climax of the Laodiceans' boast is that their situation could not be improved. Such self-satisfaction is fatal, for the Spirit of God never enters where a need for His presence is not felt, yet without that presence newness of life is impossible.

Knowest not. He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is well-nigh hopeless. The ignorance of their true condition that characterizes Laodicean Christians stands in sharp contrast with Christ's certain knowledge of the true condition of His churches, as reflected by His repeated assurance to each, "I know thy works" (chs. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

Thou art. The subject is emphatic in the Greek. The force of the sentence is, "knowest not that it is thou who art the wretched one …"

Wretched … naked. The true picture, here presented, is exactly the opposite of the boast made by the Laodicean church. Instead of being rich to the point of needing nothing, this church is, in reality, so much a pauper that she even lacks clothing.

Buy of me. Without this much effort the Laodicean "church" cannot attain the standard Christ would have her reach. The things He offers her are not without their price, yet salvation is ever free. She must give up her old way of life to be truly rich, to be healed, and to be clothed. Even she who is penniless may buy (see Isa. 55:1).

Gold. This represents spiritual riches, offered as Christ's remedy for the Laodiceans' spiritual poverty. This figurative "gold" may be interpreted as referring to "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6; James 2:5; cf. COL 158), and the works that result from faith (see 1 Tim. 6:18).

Tried in the fire. Literally, "fired out of fire," that is, gold that has come forth from the fire with its dross burned away. Doubtless the reference here is to faith that has been tried and purified by the fires of affliction (see on James 1:2–5; cf. Job 23:10).

White raiment. Offered in contrast with the Laodiceans' nakedness, which stood out so hideously in the face of their own boast that they had need of nothing (v. 17). The white raiment may be understood as the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:27; see on Matt. 22:11; Rev. 3:4; cf. 4T 88). This figure must have had special significance for the Christians of Laodicea, for their city was famous for its black woolen cloth.

Shame of thy nakedness. See Ex. 20:26; Lam. 1:8; Eze. 16:36; 23:29; Nahum 3:5.

Eyesalve. Gr. *kollurion*, "a little roll." Ancient eyesalve came to be known by the shape of the package in which it was wrapped. Near Laodicea was a temple to the Phrygian god, Men Karou. A famous school of medicine grew up in connection with this temple, and here an eye powder might be secured. This fact may form the background of the figure here used.

The figurative eyesalve here offered the Laodiceans is heaven's antidote for their spiritual blindness. Its purpose is to open their eyes to their own true condition. This is the work of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:8–11). Only through His convicting work on the heart can spiritual blindness be removed. This eyesalve may also be thought of as representing that spiritual grace which enables the Christian to distinguish between truth and error, and between right and wrong. See 4T 88.

Mayest see. That is, see sin as God sees it and realize their own real condition—as a prerequisite to repentance.

19. I love. Gr. *phileō*, "to love [as a friend, with all the warmth of personal affection]." Compare Christ's love as expressed toward the Philadelphia church by the

word *agapaō* (v. 9). For the difference between these words see on Matt. 5:43, 44; John 11:3; 21:15. This reassurance of Christ's favor shows that the Laodiceans are not without hope (see Additional Note at end of chapter). In fact, they are the special objects of His attention. His love for them is expressed by chastisement, through which He hopes to bring them to repentance (see Prov. 3:12).

I rebuke. The aim of all true remedial discipline is to bring conviction to the erring one and to encourage to a new course of action.

Chasten. Gr. *paideuō*, "to train children," "to punish," particularly as a parent punishes a child for the purpose of reforming and training him. Chastening comes to the Christian when Christ's rebuke is disregarded. Neither His rebuke nor His chastening is an expression of anger—as when a man loses his temper—but of vigorous love whose purpose is to bring sinners to repentance.

It would appear that the church at Laodicea had not as yet endured persecution, as her sister churches had, for there is no indication of suffering already endured. But Christ warns the church that it cannot continue in its halfhearted way without encountering remedial discipline. A little more than half a century after John's time it seems that the ancient Laodicean church did suffer persecution (see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iv. 26; v. 24).

Be zealous. Gr. *zēloō*, from the same root as the word *zestos*, "hot," which the Laodicean church had failed to be (v. 15). The Laodiceans are called upon to experience the warmth and enthusiasm that comes with true repentance, consecration, and devotion to Christ.

Repent. Gr. *metanoeō* (see on Matt. 3:2). The verb is in the singular, stressing the personal, individual nature of this admonition. Repentance, like salvation, can never be accomplished en masse. The spiritual experience of a relative or a friend can be of saving value to himself alone. This new attitude of sorrow for the past and zeal for the future is Christ's purpose for the Laodicean church. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

20. I stand. The form of the Greek verb implies that Christ has taken His stand at the door and remains there. He never tires of offering His blessed presence to all who will receive Him.

The door. Not the door of proffered opportunity in v. 8, nor the door of salvation (cf. Matt. 25:10; Luke 13:25). These doors God shuts and opens. The door here referred to is under the control of man, and each person may open or shut it at will. Christ awaits each man's decision. This is the door to a man's soul. By His love, through His word, and through His providences, Christ knocks at the door of the emotions; by His wisdom, at the door of the mind; by His lordship, at the door of the conscience; and by His promises, at the door of man's hopes.

This passage may also be thought of as referring to Christ standing at the door of human life, and indeed, of human history, ready to enter in and bless His waiting people with His presence (see Matt. 24:33; Luke 12:36; James 5:9).

Sup. Gr. *deipneō*, "to eat a meal," particularly the chief, or evening, meal (see on Luke 14:12). This word may be thought of as favoring the application of this verse to the great marriage feast of Rev. 19:9. The Jews commonly compared the bliss of the future life to a feast (see on Luke 14:15, 16).

With him. Few acts are more indicative of fellowship and communion than partaking of food together. In these words Christ promises to share our experiences and invites us to share His (see Gal. 2:20; Heb. 2:14–17).

21. Him that overcometh. See on ch. 2:7.

Grant to sit. See Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; cf. 1 Cor. 6:2; see on Matt. 25:31.

In my throne. The overcomer will share in the glory and power of Christ, even as Christ shares in the glory and power of His Father.

I also overcame. See on John 16:33. Only on the basis of Christ's victory can man hope to overcome.

With my Father. See Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2.

22. Hath an ear. See on ch. 2:7.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 3

The severe and uncompromising tone of the Laodicean message has led some to conclude that there is no hope for Christians of that "church" except by transferring their membership to the Philadelphia "church." Such a conclusion, however, does not accord either with the context or with sound principles of interpretation. See on ch. 1:11, and note the following:

1. This proposal assumes that the Philadelphia "church" exists simultaneously with the Laodicean "church." But if there is reason to assume that Philadelphia is synchronous with Laodicea, there is equal reason to assume the same for any or all the others. Similarly, if it is considered possible to migrate spiritually from Laodicea to Philadelphia, there is no valid reason why it should not be equally possible—and desirable—to migrate from Laodicea to Ephesus, for example, or from Sardis to Smyrna. Furthermore, if two or more periods are to be considered as existing simultaneously, the consecutive pattern is broken, the individual messages cease to have any specific chronological relationship to history, and there remains no valid basis for assuming that the Laodicean message has any more particular import for our time than for any other.

The message to any one of the seven "churches" is specifically applicable to the Christian church at a particular time in history only on the basis that the seven "churches" represent seven consecutive periods of time spanning the Christian Era, and that each message has a specific application to but one period of time. Only thus can Christians of any period be considered as belonging to a particular "church," and only thus can the Laodicean message be applied in a special way to the "church" in our time. Accordingly, when the seven "churches" are considered chronologically, as applicable to specific periods of history, Christians of one period cannot migrate spiritually to another.

2. The proposal that Laodiceans must leave their "church" and become Philadelphians in order to be saved is based on the idea that each "church" represents a particular spiritual state, or condition. Indeed, each of the seven does have its own problems, and the counsel, warning, and promise addressed to each are appropriate to it. It is equally true that some of the "churches" reflect a more desirable spiritual state, or condition, than do others.

Now, it is appropriate for the earnest Christian in any period of history to aspire to reflect the desirable characteristics of, and to be eligible for, the various promises made to all the "churches." Similarly, he should seek to avoid their undesirable characteristics and heed the threats and warnings addressed to them. But when considered from this point of view, the messages are timeless in nature and the earnest reader applies them to his own

experience on the basis of how they meet his personal needs, not on the basis of the time in which he lives. He has no need of figuratively transferring his membership from one to another.

3. Generally speaking, words of commendation are addressed to each of the "churches" except Sardis and Laodicea, words of rebuke to each except Smyrna and Philadelphia, and words of promise to all seven. Thus the "churches" had both desirable and undesirable members. But in no instance does Christ counsel the loyal members of a supposedly disloyal "church" to transfer their spiritual membership to another whose spiritual condition appears preferable. If such were His intent, we would rightly expect a positive call to come out of Sardis or Laodicea, for instance, similar to the call to come out of Babylon (ch. 18:4). But Inspiration has recorded no such call with respect to Laodicea or any of the other "churches." In each instance the remedy for the prevailing evil has been, simply but emphatically, to "*repent.*" Loyal Christians in the Ephesus "church," which had "fallen" and "left" its "first love," were *not* counseled to migrate to Smyrna (see ch. 2:4, 5). Those of the Pergamum period, which harbored the doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans (vs. 14, 15), were *not* advised to transfer their membership to Ephesus or Smyrna. The "church" at Sardis was all but dead (ch. 3:2), but its faithful members were *not* told to move to Philadelphia. Similarly, loyal Christians of the Laodicean period are *not* instructed to become Philadelphians—at least not by Christ, the *true* Witness to the Laodiceans. But they *are* told, as Laodiceans, to "repent" and to find in Christ the remedy for all their defects of character (vs. 18–20).

The idea that the Christian can better his chances of salvation through the escape mechanism of spiritual migration and by effecting a form of righteousness superior, presumably, to that of other Christians, is clearly not in harmony with the teachings of our Lord (cf. Luke 18:9–14). In the parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24–30, 37–43) the owner of the field ordered that both wheat and tares were to "grow together until the harvest" (v. 30). The tares were not to be uprooted by human hands, nor was the wheat to be transplanted to another field. Only when the angel reapers shall gather the wheat into the Owner's barn and burn the tares is there to be a general separation of the righteous from the wicked (see vs. 30, 39–42).

Members of the ancient church at Laodicea would not have improved their spiritual condition by moving to the city of Philadelphia. God's purpose for the Laodicean "church" does not include a plan for spiritual migration to some other of the apocalyptic "churches," but rather for a thoroughgoing transformation of heart and life (see on Rev. 3:18–20). Any other proposed solution to the ills of Laodicea is certain only to make an man a hypocrite.

4. It is true that no other "church" is administered so sharp a rebuke as the "church" of Laodicea, but it is also true that no other is offered more tender evidence of Christ's love, closer fellowship with Him, or a more glorious reward (see vs. 19–21). The Laodicean message is not one of unconditional rejection, any more than those addressed to the other "churches." If the spiritual poverty of the Laodiceans were beyond redress, they would not be offered "gold" by the True Witness. If their spiritual eyesight were beyond remedy, He would not offer them the heavenly "eyesalve." If their spiritual "nakedness" were beyond hope, He would not offer them His own "white raiment" (see on vs. 17, 18).

Obviously there are overcomers in Laodicea (v. 21) as in each of the preceding periods of church history, and it is to these overcomers *in* Laodicea that the promise is given to sit with Christ in His throne.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 GC 309; TM 155; 2T 176; 5T 73
1–3TM 352; 5T 610; 6T 77; 8T 98
1–68T 302
2 AA 588; CM 46; TM 357; 2T 649; 8T 136
3 DA 635; GC 310, 371, 490
4 AA 524; AH 537; CH 362, 424; Ed 249; GC 484; 5T 368, 472, 481; 9T 115
4, 5 5T 692
5 AA 589; GC 483; MB 9; Te 187, 283, 292; 5T 333
7, 8 DA 113; EW 42, 86; GC 430, 435
7–128T 303
7–13EW 30
8 AA 588; COL 117; CT 17; Ed 282; TM 107; 6T 467; 9T 182
9 EW 34, 273; 1T 59; 2T 42; 3T 355
10 GC 560, 619; 5T 297; 6T 404
10, 11 AA 588
11 ML 322; 5T 266, 501
12 DA 549; MH 516; 1T 59
14, 15 AH 438; 1T 190, 195, 480, 485; 2T 125
14–162T 175
14–173T 252
14–20EW 107, 270
14–21TM 23; 1T 186–195; 3T 252–293
14–228T 304
15 CG 152, 547; LS 322; TM 464; 3T 256, 259; 4T 51; 5T 485, 627
15, 16 MB 37; TM 130; 1T 126, 162; 4T 87; 9T 140
15–171T 182
15–18CW 99
15–193T 42; 4T 227; 6T 77
16 6T 408
16, 17 5T 484
17 CW 33, 36; DA 300; EW 118; GC 388; GW 310; MB 7; 1T 407, 591; 2T 141, 489; 3T 201, 210, 255, 451; 5T 101, 484, 682; 6T 82
17, 18 COL 117, 158; DA 280; 1T 331; 4T 88; 5T 214, 265; 8T 104, 250
18 COL 311; CT 42; EW 108; ML 311; TM 149; 1T 166, 485; 2T 36; 3T 254, 536; 4T 89, 559; 5T 105, 233; 6T 426
18, 19 1T 142; 6T 368
18–21 RC 52; 3T 257
19 MB 11; 1T 141, 153, 569, 3T 256, 258, 259; 5T 683
19, 20 8T 105
20 AA 587; AH 350; COL 325; DA 161, 489; MB 18, 151; MH 516; 1T 143, 188; 2T 216, 224; 3T 543; 5T 484; 6T 262
20, 21 3T 260

21 AA 543, 589; COL 117; DA 549; GC 416; GW 39; MB 17; MYP 116; SL 94; Te 82, 190, 282; 1T 144, 303, 680; 3T 325, 336, 380, 480; 4T 39, 215, 346; 5T 511; 6T 298

CHAPTER 4

2 *John seeth the throne of God in heaven*. 4 *The four anrd twenty elders*. 6 *The four beasts full of eyes before and behind*. 10 *The elders lay down their crowns, and worship him that sat on the throne*.

1. After this. That is, after John had seen the vision of chs. 1:10 to 3:22. The words "after this" do not imply any chronological relationship between the closing events of the preceding vision and the one about to be related.

I looked. Or, "I saw," an expression John uses repeatedly to introduce new scenes or important new symbols (see on ch. 1:2).

A door. Here the door, apparently, into the throne room of the universe (see v. 2; cf. on v. 5).

Opened. Or, "standing open."

In heaven. Not, "into heaven," as if John were on the outside looking in. Inasmuch, as looking within, he beheld the throne of God, this must have been a door opening upon the throne room of the universe. This throne room has been identified as the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

From a consideration of the state of the church on earth (chs. 1–3) John's attention is now directed to a symbolic vision of the throne of God in heaven. That the description of God's throne and the scene about it in chs. 4 and 5 is to be understood symbolically, rather than literally, is clear, for instance, from ch. 5:6, where Christ is described as "a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes," yet alive and able to come and take the book from the hand of God. Inasmuch as this is obviously a highly symbolic figure, it follows that the whole prophetic incident is to be interpreted in the same way. In symbol the prophet can soar above the mundane and material objects of human life and reach the higher levels of the mind and heart with impressions of heaven that defy expression in literal language (see on Eze. 1:10).

The first voice. The meaning of the original is more clearly expressed thus: "Behold, … the first voice which I had heard as a trumpet speaking with me, was saying …" This voice is doubtless that of ch. 1:10, which introduced the first vision and now introduces the second.

Come up hither. An invitation to John to enter into vision, directing his senses away from his earthly surroundings and focusing them on heavenly things.

Hereafter. That is, not necessarily after the fulfillment of the previous vision, but from the standpoint of John's own time. Consequently, this statement parallels that of ch. 1:1 (see comment there).

2. In the spirit. Gr. *en pneumati* (see on ch. 1:10). John goes into vision a second time. How long a period of time elapsed between the first vision and this cannot be known.

Was set. Rather, "was sitting." The throne is already in position.

One sat. John's reverent reticence about the Ruler of the universe, in avoiding terms that might seem anthropomorphic, is apparent from the fact that he describes Him simply by the participle *kathēmenos*, "sitting," without stating what or who was sitting. He implies only that a presence was upon the throne. Such a reference to the Father stands in

striking contrast with the detailed description of the Son (ch. 1:13–16); but the Son is human as well as divine, and can therefore be described appropriately in human terms. See v. 3; cf. chs. 6:16; 7:10.

3. He that sat. Here again only the participle is (see on v. 2).

Jasper. Gr. *iaspis*, not precisely the modern jasper, but a stone described by the ancient naturalist, Pliny, as translucent (*Natural History* xxxvii). John has recourse repeatedly to precious stones for describing brilliant colors, for sunlight shining on such stones produced some of the most brilliant colors known to man in his day. In the present instance, the *iaspis* probably describes a bright, flashing light, more notable for its brilliance than its color.

Sardine stone. The carnelian or some other stone of a reddish color. Pliny (*ibid.*) notes that this stone was to be found at Sardis, and accordingly took the name of that city. Here it describes a brilliant red light.

Rainbow. Compare Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God (Eze. 1:26–28).

Like unto an emerald. That is, of a green color. The brilliance of the light flashing forth from the presence on the throne is tempered by the soft green light of an encircling rainbow. This rainbow represents the combination of justice and mercy that characterizes God (see Ed 115; cf. COL 148).

4. Seats. Gr. *thronoi*, "thrones." The 24 elders are seen seated upon 24 thrones surrounding the throne of God.

Four and twenty elders. This scene is reminiscent of the LXX of Isa. 24:23, "The Lord shall reign … and before the elders He shall be glorified." The fact that the elders here portrayed are clothed in white garments, which may be symbolic of righteousness (see on Rev. 3:4), and have on their heads "crowns" (*stephanoi*, emblems of victory; see on ch. 2:10), has led some to suggest that they represent redeemed men.

One interpretation understands the description of the heavenly throne in chs. 4 and 5 to be fixed at a time before the events symbolized by the seven seals begin to take place. On this basis, if the 24 elders are human beings, it follows that they must be men already in heaven in John's day. Adventists have often identified them with the saints who arose from their graves at the time of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:52, 53; cf. Eph. 4:8), since that is a group known to have already been resurrected. The main resurrection is still future (1 Thess. 4:16). It is certain, therefore, that the presence of human beings in heaven cannot be taken as evidence that the resurrection of all the redeemed must precede the events portrayed in the seals.

Another interpretation compares the 24 elders with the 24 courses of the Levitical priesthood. As the priests ministered before God in the earthly sanctuary, so John sees 24 elders ministering in the heavenly sanctuary.

Another suggestion is that the 24 elders symbolize Israel in its fullest sense (see on Rev. 7:4)—two elders from each tribe, one symbolizing literal Israel, God's people before the cross; and the other, spiritual Israel, the Christian church, God's people since the cross. Thus they may be likened to the 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles. This view would emphasize the symbolic character of these figures, instead of making them out to be literal saints now in heaven (see on v. 1).

Some interpreters see the 24 elders as angels, not as human beings. They point out that the elders are portrayed as ministering the prayers of the saints (ch. 5:8), a work, they say, that would hardly be committed to humans.

White raiment. See on ch. 3:18.

Crowns. See the foregoing on "four and twenty elders."

Gold. Here, perhaps, simply a token of preciousness.

5. Lightnings and thunderings and voices. A favorite expression with John (see chs. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18), probably portraying power and majesty (see Job 37:4, 5; Ps. 29:3, 4; Eze. 1:13).

Seven lamps of fire. Or, "seven fiery lamps." See on ch. 5:6. Although these bear a superficial resemblance to the seven golden "candlesticks" of ch. 1:12, these are called "lamps" (*lampades*) rather than "candlesticks," or "lampstands" (*luchnia*; see on ch. 1:12). Furthermore, they are clearly said to represent the seven Spirits of God, whereas those in ch. 1 represent the seven churches (see v. 20). On the basis of this symbolism some have identified the "door" (ch. 4:1) as one opening into the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.

Seven Spirits. See on ch. 1:4.

6. Sea of glass. This description has much in common with Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God, which rested upon a "firmament" (Eze. 1:26). In ancient times glass was much more valuable than it is today. Here, it represents the clear, crystalline appearance of the surface on which the throne stood.

Crystal. Gr. *krustallos*, a word meaning either "crystal," a colorless, transparent mineral, or "ice." What John sees is a vast shimmering expanse, gloriously reflecting the red and green radiance about the throne. Compare the vision of Ezekiel (ch. 1:22).

Midst of the throne. Perhaps, like Ezekiel's cherubim (Eze. 1:22, 26), these beasts were seen under the throne as well as around it. The symbolism here is in harmony with ancient Semitic thought. Thus a sarcophagus from Byblus, from the end of the 2d millennium B.C., portrays a Phoenician king seated on a throne supported by an animal cherub (see W. F. Albright, "What Were the Cherubim?" *The Biblical Archaeologist* 1:1 [Feb., 1938], pp. 1–3). See Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16.

Beasts. Gr. *zōa*, "living beings." The word *zōa* does not indicate to what order of creatures these four belong. However, they closely resemble those of Ezekiel's vision (see on Eze. 1:5–26), which Ezekiel calls cherubim (ch. 10:20–22).

Full of eyes. See Eze. 1:18; 10:12. This may be understood as a symbol of the intelligence and ceaseless vigilance of heavenly beings.

Inasmuch as the symbol of eyes is plainly drawn from Ezekiel, it is possible to understand it here also in terms of Hebrew thought. Nine times in the OT the Hebrew word *'ayin*, "eye," is used in the sense of "color," or "brilliance" (Prov. 23:31; Eze. 1:4, 7, 16, 22, 27; 8:2; 10:9; Dan. 10:6). This suggests that in describing the four beasts as "full of eyes," John may mean that their appearance was one of shining brilliance.

7. Lion. Here each of the four beings appears with one of the four faces that were characteristic of each of the cherubim in Ezekiel's vision (see Eze. 1:10; 10:14). For a discussion of the meaning of these symbols see on Eze. 1:10.

8. Six wings. The cherubim of Ezekiel's vision each had four wings (Eze. 1:6; 10:21), whereas the seraphim of Isaiah had six (Isa. 6:2). Wings may be understood as indicating the speed with which God's heavenly creatures execute their errands (cf. Heb. 1:14).

Full of eyes. See on v. 6.

Rest not. Men customarily work by day and rest by night, but "he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). The divine power upholding the universe never relaxes.

Day and night. Night brings an intermission to most human activities, but it has no effect on the ceaseless stream of praise to God that issues forth from the beings of heaven.

Holy, holy, holy. This is also the cry of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision (see on Isa. 6:3). There is no valid reason for taking this triple ascription of praise as implying the Trinity, for it is directed to the presence on the throne, the Father. The second and third persons of the Godhead are here represented by other symbols (see Rev. 4:5; 5:6).

Lord God Almighty. See on ch. 1:8.

Was, and is, and is to come. See on ch. 1:4.

9. Those beasts. See on v. 6. The praise uttered here is antiphonal. It is initiated by heavenly creatures, those nearest to God.

Thanks. Heavenly beings as well as men owe God thanks, for He has given them life. They exist by His pleasure. In the ultimate sense God owes His creatures nothing; they owe everything to Him.

Him that sat. See on v. 2.

Who liveth for ever. Compare the OT expression "the living God" (Joshua 3:10; Ps. 42:2; 84:2). God is the source of all life, and the fact that He "liveth for ever" is the basis of His unceasing sustenance of nature (see on John 1:4; Rev. 4:8).

10. Four and twenty elders. See on v. 4.

Him that sat. See on v. 2.

Liveth for ever. See on v. 9.

Cast their crowns. See on v. 4.

11. Worthy. God is "worthy" to receive praise from His creatures, because He has given them life and all else they possess. He has made them what they are.

O Lord. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "our Lord and God." Those who hold the view that the 24 elders are human beings point out that the use of the title *kurios*, "Lord," by the elders and not by the four beasts may be significant, for *kurios* is the Greek counterpart of the Heb. *Yahweh*, the divine name by which God revealed Himself to His people (see Ex. 6:2, 3). Such a title, they assert, is particularly fitting for the praises of men. See Vol. I, pp. 171, 172.

For thy pleasure. Or, "by thy will." It pleased God to bring the universe into existence and to give life to its creatures. He saw that it was good to do so. There was nothing desirable from His point of view in being alone in an empty universe. It pleased Him that the universe should be peopled with intelligent beings, capable of appreciating and reflecting His infinite love and perfect character. This was His purpose in creating them.

Are and were created. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, "they were, and they were created." By the expression "they were" John doubtless refers to the

existence of the universe after God had brought it into being. God created and now sustains all things (see on Col. 1:17).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2, 3 PP 107
3 DA 493; Ed 115; PK 370; TM 157; 6T 340; 8T 23
5 GC 414; PP 356; SR 377
8 CT 402; EW 116, 288; GC 645; SR 412
10 EW 191, 289, 295; ML 352; 8T 254
11 GC 437; PK 70

CHAPTER 5

1 *The book sealed with seven seals:* 9 *which only the Lamb that was slain is worthy to open*. 12 *Therefore the elders praise him,* 9 *and confess that he redeemed them with his blood*.

1. I saw. See on ch. 4:1. The setting of this chapter is the same as that of ch. 4. However, where ch. 4 largely describes a scene centering on God's throne, ch. 5 focuses upon the Lamb and the sealed scroll.

"The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days"
(9T 267; see on vs. 7, 13).

Him that sat. See on ch. 4:2.

Book. Gr. *biblion*, "scroll," "book." In NT times the most common type of book was the papyrus roll, and it is doubtless such a "book" that John sees here. The codex, or book of leaves fastened together at one edge, is not known to have been used by bookmakers until the 2d century A.D. See Vol. V, p. 113.

Within and on the backside. Some commentators have suggested that this passage should be punctuated with a comma after the word "within" rather than after the word "backside." The meaning would then be that the "book" was written on the inside, and sealed on the backside, or outside.

Punctuated as in the KJV, the passage would indicate that the roll was written on both sides. This interpretation appears to have merit for two reasons. First, the Greek expression *esōthen kai opisthen*, "within and on the backside," seems to be a unit made up of two similar-sounding adverbs, which would imply that they are to be understood together. Second, ancient papyrus scrolls, because of the nature of the material, seldom exceeded 30 ft. in length. Normally they were written on the inside only, but because of this limitation in size, occasionally the backside of the papyrus also was used if the matter to be recorded exceeded the available space on the inside. The present passage seems to indicate such a situation, and would imply that there is scarcely space to contain the record presented in this "book."

Seven seals. The number seven being a symbol of perfection (see on ch. 1:11), this statement would imply that the "book" was perfectly sealed. In fact, no one but the Lamb could open it (see ch. 5:3, 5).

According to COL 294, the decision of the Jewish rulers to reject Christ "was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne." Apparently, then, that sealed book includes more than a record of events during the period of the Christian church, though the prophecies of the Revelation are specifically concerned with the latter. See on ch. 6:1.

2. Who is worthy? The ability to open the book is not a question of strength or dignity or position, but of victory and moral worth (see on v. 5; cf. ch. 4:11).

3. No man. Gr. *oudeis*, "not one," including not only men but all beings throughout the universe.

In heaven. These words introduce a literary device employed to describe all of God's universe.

To look thereon. That is, to read it and thus to reveal its contents.

4. I wept much. These words reflect John's intense emotional reaction to the drama now passing before his eyes. What he saw and heard was very real to him.

No man. Gr. *oudeis*, see on v. 3.

Worthy. See on v. 2.

And to read. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

5. Elders. See on ch. 4:4.

Weep not. Or, "stop weeping." The Greek suggests that John was already in tears.

Lion of the tribe of Juda. This title is probably based on Gen. 49:9. Christ was born of the tribe of Judah (see on Matt. 1:2). The figure of a lion signifies strength (Rev. 9:8, 17; 10:3; 13:2, 5), and Christ has won the victory (see below on "hath prevailed") in the great controversy with evil. This is what gives Him the right to open the book (see on ch. 5:7).

It may be noted, further, that in the role of "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" Christ appears as the One who "prevailed," the triumphant One, the One who champions the cause of His people. In v. 6 He appears as "a Lamb as it had been slain," the One who had redeemed them.

Root of David. This title is drawn from Isa. 11:1, 10, which speaks, literally, of the "shoot out of the stock [LXX, "root"] of Jesse" and the "root of Jesse," David's father. In Rom. 15:12 Paul applies the latter figure to Christ, implying that Christ is a second David. David was Israel's greatest king and military hero. The Davidic concept of the Messiah was essentially that of a conqueror who would restore the kingdom to Israel (Matt. 21:9 cf. Acts 1:6). Although Christ did not restore a literal kingdom to the Jews, His victory in the great controversy with Satan does restore the kingdom in an infinitely greater and more important sense. Therefore, from the point of view of the present passage, this title is most fitting.

Hath prevailed. Gr. *nikaō*, "to conquer," "to be victorious." This points directly to Christ's victory in the great controversy with Satan, which is the basis of His right to open the book. Inasmuch as no one else in the entire universe could do this (v. 3), His victory is unique. An angel could not have taken Christ's place, for the basic issue in the great controversy is the integrity of the character of God, which is expressed in His law. Neither angel nor man could have accomplished this vindication, for they themselves are subject to the law (see PP 66). Only Christ, who is God, and of whose character the law is an expression, could achieve such a vindication of the divine character. This fact is central to the thought of ch. 5 (see on vs. 9–13).

6. In the midst. This may be interpreted as meaning that the Lamb was standing between the living creatures and the throne, among the elders. But such an arrangement is difficult to visualize when compared with ch. 4:4, 6. It is also possible to understand that

the Lamb appeared in the midst of all. This is probably the better explanation, as He now becomes the focal point of the vision (cf. Acts 7:56).

Four beasts. See on ch. 4:6.

Elders. See on ch. 4:4.

Lamb. Gr. *arnion*, a word used 29 times in the Revelation, and only once elsewhere in the NT (John 21:15). The thought is the same, however, as that conveyed by the word *amnos*, "lamb," in John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19, and the LXX of Isa. 53:7.

John has just heard Christ called a lion and a conqueror, but as he looks he sees a lamb Such a dramatic contrast may suggest that Christ's victory is not one of physical force but of moral excellence, for above all things else He is declared to be "worthy" (see on Rev. 5:2). It is the vicarious sacrifice of His sinless life, symbolized by that of a spotless lamb, rather than any demonstration of force, that has gained for Him the victory in the great controversy with evil.

The NT characterization of Christ as "the Lamb" appears only in the writings of John, although both Philip and Peter apply to Him the OT symbol of a lamb (Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19).

As it had been slain. John probably sees the Lamb with His death wound still bleeding, as a lamb slain for sacrifice in the sanctuary service. The word "as" indicates that this is a symbol. John is not saying that a slaughtered lamb really stands before the throne of God in heaven. Rather, he is describing what he sees in symbolic vision. Since this is apparently true of the Lamb, it follows that other features of this vision, the seven lamps (ch. 4:5), the four living creatures (ch. 4:6), and the book (ch. 5:1) are also symbolic (see on Eze. 1:10; Rev. 4:1). The form of the verb translated "had been slain" implies that the act of slaughter had taken place in the past, and that its results remained. Thus, though Christ's death is historically in the past, its results for mankind are ever fresh and availing. For the significance of the figure of Jesus as the Lamb of God see on John 1:29.

Seven horns. Seven is a number signifying perfection. Horns may be understood as symbols of strength and glory (see on Lam. 2:3). Thus the seven horns of the Lamb would indicate that He is perfect in strength.

Seven eyes. A symbol of perfect wisdom and intelligence. These eyes are identified as the seven Spirits of God, an expression used for the Holy Spirit (see on ch. 1:4). In ch. 4:5 a different symbol, "seven lamps," is used.

Sent forth. See Zech. 1:10; 6:5; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Gal. 4:6.

7. He came and took. Literally, "he came and he has taken." This is the focal point of chs. 4 and 5—that Christ, by taking the book from the hand of God, does what no other being in the universe can do (see on ch. 5:5). This action is symbolic of His victory over evil, and when He does this the great antiphonal hymn of all creation resounds throughout the universe (see on vs. 9–13).

John's words, "he came and he has taken," are the words of a man whose pen can scarcely keep pace with the dramatic scenes passing before his eyes. In breathless wonder and excitement he declares that Christ "has taken" the book. See on v. 13.

The book. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. However, that it is the book that the Lamb takes is clear from v. 8.

Him that sat. See on ch. 4:2.

8. When he had taken. This is the point at which the heavenly host responds (see on v. 7).

Four beasts. See on ch. 4:6.

Elders. See on ch. 4:4.

Harps. Gr. *kitharai*, "lyres," instruments often used to accompany singing (see Vol. III, pp. 34–36), not harps. However, textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading *kithara*, "a lyre"; that is, each elder held a lyre in his hand. Mention here of these instruments is natural, in connection with the hymn that is about to be sung (vs. 9, 10).

Vials. Gr. *phialai*, "bowls," or "saucers," the dishes in which offerings were commonly presented. According to Josephus, *phialai* of incense were placed on the showbread in the sanctuary (*Antiquities* iii. 6. 6 [143]). That the prayers of the saints are contained in golden receptacles may indicate the preciousness with which heaven regards them.

Odours. That is, incense.

Prayers of saints. Their possession of "harps" and of incense dishes representing the prayers of saints suggests that the elders represent Christ's triumphant church on earth, lifting its voice in song and prayer. See on vs. 9, 10; see PP 353.

9. They. That is, the 24 elders and perhaps also the 4 beasts (see below on "us").

A new song. The song was new in the sense that it was entirely different from any sung before. This expression is common in the OT (see Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Isa. 42:10). Here it is particularly fitting, for it represents the song growing out of a unique experience—salvation through the victory of Jesus Christ (see on Rev. 5:5). It is the "new song" of those who have a "new name" (chs. 2:17; 3:12), who inhabit the "new Jerusalem" (ch. 21:2), when all things are made "new" (ch. 21:5).

Worthy. See on v. 2. The heavenly chorus leads out in the recognition that God has been vindicated from the accusations of Satan, through the victory of His Son. Some see in the 24 elders representatives of the saints, who themselves were once captives of evil. The saints appear before the onlooking universe as witnesses to the righteousness and the grace of God. See on Rev. 5:5; cf. Eph. 3:10.

Thou wast slain. The death of Christ, with its resulting salvation for man—which in turn vindicates the character of God—is the basis for the worthiness of Christ (see on v. 2).

Us. In spite of the fact that textual evidence attests retaining this word, translators and commentators generally omit it on the basis of other textual evidence in v. 10 (see comment there).

By thy blood. See on Rom. 3:25; 5:9.

10. Us. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "them," with reference to the redeemed of v. 9. The reading "us" was probably taken by the KJV translators from the Latin Vulgate. It is thus evident that in v. 10 the ones speaking do not specifically include themselves as "kings and priests." It is not impossible, however, that they may be speaking of themselves in the third person, but this is not the natural conclusion to which the reading of the ancient manuscripts points. According to the preferred reading vs. 9, 10 may be translated as follows: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open its seals, because thou wast slain and didst purchase to God by thy blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and didst make them to our God a kingdom and priests,

and they shall reign upon the earth" (see below under "kings" and "we shall reign"). The kingdom is doubtless the spiritual kingdom of grace (see on Matt. 4:17; 5:3; Rev. 1:6).

Kings. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "a kingdom" (see on ch. 1:6).

Priests. See on ch. 1:6.

We shall reign. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "they shall reign" (see above under "us").

On the earth. The time of the reign on earth is not here specified, but in chs. 20; 21 is shown to be in the postmillennial period.

11. Many angels. In response to the testimony of the 4 beasts and the 24 elders, the hosts of heaven join in acclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb. Thus God is vindicated before the angels, who, since the first accusations of Satan in heaven, have not fully understood His action in banishing Satan and saving men (see DA 761, 764).

The beasts. See on ch. 4:6. These living creatures take part in the acclamation of praise to God (ch. 5:12), which expresses appreciation for the death of Christ.

Ten thousand. This is evidently not meant to be a literal number, but rather implies numberless hosts. It is probably drawn from Dan. 7:10, and may be compared with a passage in the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch (see Vol. V, p. 87), ch. 14:22: "ten thousand times ten thousand (stood) before Him" (R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 197). See Heb. 12:22.

12. Worthy. See on vs. 2, 9.

Lamb. See on v. 6.

Power. Gr. *dunamis*, here, the power of God in action. The doxology of the heavenly hosts is sevenfold. Inasmuch as seven signifies perfection, and is used repeatedly in this vision as well as throughout the Revelation (see on ch. 1:11), it may be that the sevenfold praise of ch. 5:12 implies that the praise of heaven is complete and perfect.

Riches. Compare on Phil. 4:19.

Wisdom. Gr. *sophia* (cf. on James 1:5).

Strength. Gr. *ischus*, which here probably refers to divine energy as potential.

13. Every creature. That is, every created being. The chorus swells, and in response to the cries of praise from the hosts of heaven, all creation joins in adoration of the Father and the Son. Christ is victor, and the character of God is vindicated before the whole universe (see on v. 11).

To what point in the great controversy do the symbolic scenes portrayed in chs. 4 and 5 refer? According to DA 834 the song was sung by the angels when Christ was installed at the right hand of God after ascension. Also, according to AA 601, 602; GC 671, this song will be sung by the saints at the establishment of the new earth and by the redeemed and angels in eternity (8T 44; cf. PP 541; GC 545, 678). This varied setting suggests that the vision of chs. 4 and 5 is not to be thought of as representing any one specific occurrence in heaven, but as a timeless, highly symbolic portrayal of the victory of Christ and the resulting vindication of God. When so understood, this vision may be seen as representing the attitude of heaven toward the Son and His work since the cross, an attitude that rises to a crescendo as the great controversy comes to its victorious climax. For the nature of symbolic visions see on Eze. 1:10.

In heaven, and on the earth. From the standpoint of ancient cosmology, heaven, earth, under the earth, and sea constitute the entire universe. All creation will finally recognize the righteousness of God (see GC 670, 671).

Blessing. The four ascriptions of v. 13 are parallel to four in the sevenfold doxology of v. 12.

Power. Gr. *kratos*, "power [to rule]," "dominion," parallel to "strength" in v. 12 but differing from it in that *kratos* represents divine power in action. It is such power that earthly creatures witness (see on v. 12).

Him that sitteth. See on ch. 4:2.

The Lamb. See on v. 6. The fact that the Lamb is adored here on the same basis as the Father implies their equality (see Phil. 2:9–11).

14. Amen. See on Matt. 5:18. Both the antiphonal praises and the following "Amen" portrayed here were characteristic of early Christian worship. Pliny, writing less than two decades after John, records that in their worship services the Christians "sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god" (*Letters* x. 96; Loeb ed., vol. 2, p. 403). Describing the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Justin Martyr, writing in the 2d century, says that after the leader of the congregation had offered prayers and thanksgivings, "the people assent, saying Amen" (*First Apology* 67; *ANF*, vol. 1, p. 186).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–5COL 294
1–149T 267
5 DA 243; PP 236; TM 115
5, 6 AA 589
6 TM 124
9 GC 652
10 EW 290
11 CH 32; GC 479, 511, 641, 678; MB 108; ML 88, 307; PP 36; SR 433
11–146T 59
12 AH 541; DA 131, 834; GC 647, 648, 671; MH 507; ML 348; SL 91
12, 13 AA 601; MH 506; 8T 44
13 CT 246; DA 835; GC 545, 678; PP 541; SR 433; 2T 215; 6T 368

[2]

CHAPTER 6

1 *The opening of the seals in order, and what followed thereupon, containing a prophecy to the end of the world.*

1. I saw. See on ch. 4:1. The vision continues with the same setting presented in chs. 4 and 5, but a new phase of action now begins. The seals of the book (ch. 5:1–5) are being opened.

The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

Opened one of the seals. The following statement throws light on the significance of the seals: "Their [the Jewish leaders] decision [to crucify Christ] was registered in the

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[2]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 2:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (COL 294). This statement shows that, among other things, the book records the actions of the Jews at the trial of Christ, and that in the great final judgment (see on ch. 20:11–15) these enemies of Christ will be confronted with the record of their evil deeds. It seems reasonable to conclude that the book contains a record also of other significant events in the great controversy through the ages. It appears that John was given a preview of certain of these events. In symbolic form the history of the great controversy was presented before him until it reaches its great climax in the vindication of God's character at the time of the final judgment (ch. 20:11–15; see on ch. 5:13). The fact that Christ "prevailed to open the book" (ch. 5:5) means that He is conqueror in the controversy and Lord of history. Compare GC 666–672.

Like the messages to the seven churches, the scenes revealed when the seals are opened may be regarded as having both a specific and a general application (see on ch. 1:11). The scenes may be viewed as particularly significant of successive phases in the history of the church on earth.

Beasts. See on ch. 4:6.

Come and see. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) as to whether the words "and see" should be included. If they are retained, the command is addressed to John; if not, it is addressed probably to the horse and his rider (v. 2), who, upon being addressed, come forth upon the scene of action. The same division of evidence appears in vs. 3, 5, 7.

2. A white horse. The symbols of the four horses in the first four seals (vs. 2–8) have often been compared with the four horses in Zechariah's vision (Zech. 6:2, 3). There are some similarities in the symbolism employed, but there are also dissimilarities. The order in which the horses are named is different. In Revelation the horses bear riders; in Zechariah they draw chariots. The application of the symbols is also quite dissimilar (see on Zech. 6).

Commentators have held two main views with regard to the interpretation of the first horse and its rider. One group understands this symbol as representing the church in the apostolic age (c. A.D. 31–100), when its purity of faith (suggested by the color white) and its zeal led it forth to make the greatest spiritual conquests in Christian history. Probably no century since the first of the Christian Era has seen such brilliant expansion of the kingdom of God. The bow in the rider's hand would symbolize conquest, and the crown (*stephanos*; see on Rev. 2:10), victory. So swiftly was the gospel carried that when writing to the Colossians about the year A.D. 62 Paul declared that the good news had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23; cf. AA 48, 578).

Another group of commentators believes that the horses and riders do not represent the church as such but that they represent various adverse conditions under which the church has lived and through which, by God's grace, it has survived. In Biblical symbolism the horse is connected with war (see Joel 2:1, 4, 5), and the equipment of the horseman on the white horse indicates that the rider is a warrior. Both the crown of the rider and the whiteness of the horse may be understood as implying victory. Thus the first horseman is taken to represent a time when the people of God lived in a world characterized by military conquest and dominion, when Rome, going forth "conquering, and to conquer," maintained the leading world power.

Seventh-day Adventists have generally held that the first horse represents the church in the apostolic age.

A bow. A sign of warfare.

Crown. Gr. *stephanos* (see on ch. 2:10).

Conquering, and to conquer. Literally, "conquering, and that he might conquer." This implies continued victory.

3. Second beast. See on ch. 4:6. In turn, each of the living creatures announces one of the four horsemen.

Come and see. See on v. 1.

4. Red. The symbolism of the second horseman well portrays conditions under which the church found itself from about A.D. 100–313 (cf. on ch. 2:10). The violent persecutions it suffered at the hands of the Roman Caesars are well characterized by a horseman who carries a "great sword" and has power "to take peace from the earth." If white represents purity of faith (see on ch. 6:2), then red may be regarded as a corruption of faith through the introduction of various heresies (see Vols. IV, p. 835; VI, pp. 43–46, 51–58, 64–67).

According to another view the color of this horse is suggestive of blood. As the first horseman may be taken as symbolizing the glory of military conquest (see on v. 2), so the second may be regarded as portraying other aspects of warfare—loss of peace and abundance of slaughter. Such would be the inevitable result of the conquest portrayed by the first horseman, if he is understood to symbolize the conquest and dominion of Rome.

Seventh-day Adventists have generally held the first view.

Sword. Gr. *machaira*, a large knife or short sword used for fighting. Compare the use of the word in Matt. 10:34; John 18:10; etc.

5. Third beast. See on chs. 4:6; 6:3.

Come and see. See on v. 1.

A black horse. If the white horse implied victory, or its color purity (see on v. 2), so the black horse may be thought of as indicating defeat or its color further corruption of faith.

A pair of balances. Gr. *zugos*, "a yoke," here used for the crossbar of a balance. This symbol may be thought of as characterizing the spiritual condition within the church after the legalization of Christianity in the 4th century, when church and state were united. Following this union much of the concern of the church was with secular matters, and in many instances a dearth of spirituality ensued. For a history of this period see pp. 18–25.

These balances may also be interpreted as a symbol of undue concern for the material necessities of life. No longer does warfare result in victory, as with the first horseman (see on v. 2), or represent largely bloodshed, as with the second (see on v. 4), but now an even more dreaded result has followed—famine.

6. A measure. Gr. *choinix*, a measure approximately equivalent to a quart (see Vol. V, p. 50). This amount of grain represented a day's ration of food for a workingman.

A penny. Gr. *dēnarios*, a coin worth some 11 cents in terms of modern monetary values (see Vol. V, p. 49). The Roman "penny" represented a day's wages for an ordinary laborer (see Matt. 20:2). Hence a day's ration of wheat for a day's labor represented barely sufficient food for the laborer and his family. Much less would be actual

starvation. According to grain prices quoted by Cicero (*Against Verres* iii. 81) for Sicily, the prices mentioned by John were about 8 to 16 times the normal prices. However, in spite of famine, survival is possible. So God has ever preserved His children in times of need.

As applied to the period of Christian history following the legalization of Christianity, about A.D. 313–538 (cf. p. 753), the words of the unidentified speaker may be interpreted as indicating a general preoccupation with material things.

Barley. This grain was cheaper than wheat, as is indicated here by the relative prices (see 2 Kings 7:18). Barley was a common food of the poor, and was used as feed for animals (see on John 6:9).

Hurt not. The voice that announces the high cost of wheat and barley also commands that oil and wine are not to be uselessly destroyed.

The oil and the wine. These were the two common liquids used as food in the ancient world. Some have interpreted them as symbols of faith and love, which were to be preserved in the face of the materialism that dominated the church after its legalization in the 4th century.

7. Fourth seal. Compare on chs. 5:1; 6:1.

Fourth beast. See on chs. 4:6; 6:3.

Come and see. See on v. 1.

8. Pale. The color of fear and death. With the pale horse the times of distress reach a fearful climax (see on vs. 2, 4, 5).

Hell. Gr. *hadēs*, "the abode of the dead" (see on Matt. 11:23). Death and hell are here personified and represented, the one as a rider on the horse, and the other as following along.

Fourth part of the earth. Probably signifying a wide area of the earth.

Sword. Gr. *rhomphaia* (see on ch. 1:16). The series—sword, hunger, death (or pestilence; see below on "death"), and beasts—may be thought of as portraying the progressive deterioration of civilization that follows warfare. The ravages of the sword, killing men and destroying crops, produce hunger; hunger, resulting in the breakdown of health, brings pestilence; and when pestilence has taken its toll, human society is so weakened that it cannot protect itself against the inroads of wild beasts.

When applied to a particular period of Christian history, the fourth horseman seems to portray a situation especially characteristic of the period from about 538 to 1517, the beginning of the Reformation (cf. pp. 753, 754; see on ch. 2:18).

Death. The phrase "to kill … with death" seems hardly to make good sense. This difficulty probably is resolved best by understanding the word translated "death," *thanatos*, here, as meaning "pestilence." The LXX repeatedly translates the Hebrew word *deber*, "pestilence," by *thanatos* (see Lev. 26:25; Jer. 21:6; Eze. 5:12). John, to whom Semitic thought was more natural than Greek, apparently follows the LXX usage here rather than a strictly Greek definition of the word.

9. The altar. The altar presented in the prophetic picture was probably reminiscent of the bronze altar of the Hebrew sanctuary, and the martyrs may be thought of as sacrifices presented to God. As the blood of the victims was poured out at the base of that altar (see Lev. 4:7), and "the life [LXX, *psuchē*, "soul"] of the flesh is in the blood" (ch. 17:11), so

the souls of those who have given themselves in martyrdom may be thought of as being beneath the altar. Later Jewish tradition set forth the idea that Israel's dead were buried, as it were, under the altar, and those buried under the altar were interred, as it were, under the throne of glory (see Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, p. 803).

Some hold that the altar should be identified with the one mentioned in Rev. 8:3.

Souls. Gr. *psuchai*, for a discussion of which see on Matt. 10:28. It should be remembered that John was viewing pictorial representations, and that the rules governing the interpretation of such prophecies must be kept in mind when the meaning of the various symbols is sought (see on Eze. 1:10). John saw an altar at the base of which lay the "souls" of martyrs. Rules of interpretation do not require us to locate a specific altar in a certain location at a particular moment of history. As with the details of a parable, not all features of a prophetic symbolization necessarily have interpretative value. It appears that the symbolization of the fifth seal was presented to encourage those who faced martyrdom and death, with the assurance that despite the seeming triumph of the enemy, vindication would ultimately come. Such an encouragement would be particularly heartening for those living in the time of the terrible persecutions of the later Middle Ages, but more especially during the time of the Reformation and after (c. 1517–1755; see pp. 41–67; see on v. 12). To them, it must have seemed that the long period of oppression would never end. The message of the fifth seal was a reassurance that the cause of God would ultimately triumph. The same encouragement will come to those passing through the last great conflict (see 5T 451).

Any attempt to interpret these "souls" as the disembodied spirits of departed martyrs does violence to the rules of interpretation of symbolic prophecies. John was not given a view of heaven as it actually appears. There are no white, red, black, or pale horses there with warlike riders. Jesus does not appear there in the form of a lamb with a bleeding knife wound. The four beasts do not represent actual winged creatures of the animal characteristics noted (see Vol. III, pp. 1111). Likewise, there are no "souls" lying at the base of an altar in heaven. The whole scene was a pictorial and symbolic representation designed to teach the spiritual lesson above noted.

Them that were slain. The focus of the revelation now changes from a description of the widespread conditions of destruction and death under which God's people suffer, to a consideration of the condition of the saints themselves.

Word of God. See on ch. 1:2, 9.

Testimony. See on ch. 1:2, 9.

10. They cried. That is, in the pictorial representation (see on v. 9). The "souls" are heard speaking.

Lord. Gr. *despotēs* (see on Luke 2:29). The correlative of *despotēs* is *doulos*, "slave" (see 1 Peter 2:18). By giving their lives the martyrs have shown themselves true "slaves of God" (see Titus 1:1; cf. on Rev. 6:11), and thus He is their Master. The reference here is probably to the Father.

Holy and true. See on ch. 3:7, where these words are applied to Christ.

Avenge. The martyrs do not seek vengeance for themselves; they seek, instead, the vindication of God's name (see Rom. 12:19; see on Rev. 5:13).

Them that dwell. See on ch. 3:10.

11. Robes. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "a robe" (*stolē*). This is a different word from that translated "raiment" in chs. 3:5; 4:4. The *stolē* was a long robe worn as a mark of distinction (see on Mark 12:38). In vision John observes the "souls" being clothed, each one in a white robe. The representation seems to be designed to show that in spite of their ignominious deaths, and of the fact that their martyrdoms have not yet been avenged by God, the martyrs are already recognized by God as conquerors.

In John's day such an assurance was particularly comforting to Christians who had seen their fellow believers destroyed in the persecution of Nero (A.D. 64), and who now faced martyrdom themselves in the persecution of Domitian (see Vol. VI, p. 87). In every age since that time the promises of God to His martyred saints have cheered those who themselves were about to give their lives for His name's sake.

Rest. The command is given to those who in prophetic vision were agitated over the seeming long delay. In actual fact the martyrs have been at rest ever since they laid down their lives, and will continue to be at rest until the resurrection (cf. on ch. 14:13). Their "fellowservants" would carry on the struggle until they too were victorious in martyrdom.

For a little season. The time was not to be indefinitely delayed (see on ch. 1:1; cf. ch. 12:12). The great controversy with evil must be fought out to a glorious climax. Sin must be allowed to demonstrate its ugly character so fully that never again will there be a question as to God's righteousness and justice (see on ch. 5:13).

Fellowservants. Gr. *sundouloi*, "fellow slaves" (cf. on v. 10).

Should be fulfilled. That is, the number should be completed (see RSV). This does not mean that Providence has decreed that a specific number should be martyred. It was necessary that a certain time elapse so that the true nature of Satan's program of action might be fully demonstrated, and God thereby shown to be just and glorious.

12. A great earthquake. The events of the sixth seal reveal the disjointing of the physical universe. The prophet Joel had already used the figure of an earthquake to describe the upheaval of nature in the day of the Lord (Joel 2:10; cf. Isa. 13:9–11; Amos 8:9).

Inasmuch as the earthquake is followed by the darkening of the sun, and the latter event may be dated in A.D. 1780 (see below on "sun became black"), this earthquake has been identified with the Lisbon quake on Nov. 1, 1755, one of the most extensive and severe seismological disturbances ever recorded. The shock of the quake was felt not only in North Africa but also as far away as the West Indies. Identification with the great Lisbon earthquake suggests 1755 as an appropriate beginning date (cf. p. 754).

Sun became black. The darkening of the sun is frequently mentioned in OT prophecy in connection with the catastrophes that precede the day of the Lord (see on Isa. 13:10). Jesus took particular note of this phenomenon in His prophecy of the end of the world, and noted it as one of the signs by which His followers might know that His coming was near (see on Matt. 24:29, 33; see GC 334).

A spectacular, literal fulfillment of the scene described here was experienced in eastern New York and southern New England on May 19, 1780. A careful study of newspaper reports of that time reveals that an unusual darkness appeared in eastern New York and southwestern New England about ten o'clock that morning, and during the day made its way eastward across southern and central New England, and to some distance at sea. Each locality reported that the darkness lasted several hours. This phenomenon

occurred at the time predicted—"in those days, after that tribulation" (Mark 13:24; see on Matt. 24:29). It was observed in an area where a remarkable revival of interest in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation was about to take place, and was recognized by students of these prophecies as fulfilling the present passage (see GC 304–308).

Moon became as blood. See on Matt. 24:29.

13. Stars of heaven fell. See on Matt. 24:29; cf. Isa. 34:4. See GC 333.

Untimely figs. Gr. *olunthoi*, defined by some as early figs that fall off before they come to maturity. Some fig trees of inferior variety cast off all or nearly all of their fruit when it has reached the size of a cherry. Others define *olunthoi* as late or summer figs. See Isa. 34:4.

14. Scroll. Gr. *biblion* (see on ch. 5:1). The picture here is of the sky being rolled up like a roll of parchment. In ancient cosmology the sky was considered to be a solid vault above the earth. The prophet now sees the sky rolled back, that the earth may stand unshielded before God. Isaiah (ch. 34:4) presents the same picture. This event is doubtless the same as that described by Jesus when He said, "The powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (see on Matt. 24:29). This event is yet future and is closely connected with the actual appearance of the Son of man in the heavens.

Every mountain and island. In ch. 16:20 these fearful convulsions are presented as events taking place under the seventh plague.

15. Kings. See chs. 16:14; 17:12. The list that follows runs the whole gamut of social and political life as it existed in the Roman world of John's day. Though the actual coming of Christ is not mentioned here, the context makes clear that Christ is about to appear.

Great men. Gr. *megistanes*, "chief men," "nobles," perhaps corresponding to the Latin *magistrati*, civil officials of the Roman government, such as Pliny (see Vol. VI, pp. 61–63, 88), who often sent Christian martyrs to their deaths.

Rich men. See on James 5:1–6.

Chief captains. Gr. *chiliarchoi*, "chiefs of a thousand." In the NT this word is used for the Roman military tribune (see John 18:12; Acts 21:31–33), and so here it probably represents high military officers.

Mighty men. Compare 1 Cor. 1:26.

Bondman. Or, "slave."

Free man. Compare chs. 13:16; 19:18.

16. Fall on us. See Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30. To face God now is more fearful than to face death itself.

Wrath. Gr. *orgē* (see on Rom. 1:18).

17. Great day. See Joel 2:11, 31; see on Isa. 13:6.

Who shall be able to stand? Compare Nahum 1:6; Mal. 3:2; Luke 21:36. With this searching question the present scene comes to a close. Each of the six seals that have been opened shows a different phase of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and each helps to demonstrate before the onlooking universe the righteousness of God (see on Rev. 5:13). Now there is a pause in the opening of the seals, for a question must be answered. Thus far in the portrayal of the terrible events that precede the second advent, no indication has been given that anyone survives them. Hence the dramatic

question, "Who shall be able to stand?" Chapter 7 breaks the sequence of the seals in order to present an answer.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 8T 41
6 5T 614
10 5T 451
11 COL 180
12 GC 304
12–17 GC 334; 9T 267
13 GC 333
14 EW 41, 290
14–17 PP 340
15 EW 292
15–17 EW 287; GC 642; SC 18; 2T 41
16 EW 76; LS 91; MB 26; 1T 74; 5T 656
16, 17 DA 740; 2T 42
17 EW 16; GC 641, 642; TM 444; 1T 15, 60; 6T 405

CHAPTER 7

3 *An angel sealeth the servants of God in their foreheads*. 4 *The number of them that were sealed: of the tribes of Israel a certain number*. 9 *Of all other nations an innumerable multitude, which stand before the throne, clad in white robes, and palms in their hands*. 14 *Their robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb*.

1. After. See on ch. 4:1. For the relation between ch. 7 and ch. 6 see on ch. 6:17.

I saw. See on ch. 4:1.

Four angels. These angels represent divine agencies in the world holding back the forces of evil until the work of God on human hearts is complete and the people of God are sealed in their foreheads (see on ch. 6:17).

Four corners. Compare Isa. 11:12; Eze. 7:2. This signifies that the whole earth is threatened.

Four winds. Frequently in Scripture the "four winds" represent the four directions of the compass (see Dan. 8:8; Mark 13:27). Here the four winds are plainly destructive forces (see v. 3). Probably the closest parallel is to be found in Dan. 7:2, where they appear to be the forces of strife out of which great nations arise.

It has been suggested that inasmuch as Rev. 7 appears to be an answer to the final question of ch. 6 (see on ch. 6:17), this holding of the four winds is a temporary withholding of the terrors depicted in ch. 6, until those who are to stand firm in the tempest have made preparation for it.

Viewed in the light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, these destructive forces represent the efforts of Satan to spread ruin and destruction everywhere. In symbolic vision John saw four angels; actually, many angels are employed in the task of holding in check the designs of the enemy. These angels belt "the world. … They are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished. … They are given the work of keeping back the raging power of him who has come down like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 5:11). When the work of sealing is completed, then God will say to the angels, "'No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy. Let him work

out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full'" (EGW RH Sept. 17, 1901; cf. 6T 408).

When the four angels finally let go and cease holding in check the malicious designs of Satan and "the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old" (GC 614).

On the earth. The three items here mentioned—earth, sea, and tree—emphasize the universal nature of the threatened destruction.

2. Another angel. That is, in addition to the four holding the winds (see on v. 1).

From the east. Literally, "from the rising of the sun." In ancient times east was the cardinal point of the compass. Directions were reckoned from the point of view of a person facing east (see on Ex. 3:1). It was from this direction that Ezekiel saw the glory of God entering the temple (ch. 43:2–5). The sign of the Son of man will appear in the east (Matt. 24:30; cf. GC 640, 641). The direction from which the angel comes may therefore denote that he comes from, and is dispatched by, God.

Some prefer the literal rendering, "from the rising of the sun," and believe that the stress is not on locality but on manner, that is, the approach of the angel is like that of the sun rising in its splendor. See on ch. 16:12.

Seal. From remote antiquity seals were used in the Near East much as signatures are today. Thus they attested the authorship of a document, indicated the ownership of the object upon which the seal was impressed, or secured objects such as chests, boxes, tombs, against being opened or molested. One inscription indicates that the seal is that "of Shema' Servant of Jeroboam" (David Diringer, *The Biblical Archaeologist,* XII [1949], p. 84). Another reads, "Belonging to 'Asayau son of Yauqïm (Yöqïm)" (W. F. Albright, *Journal of Biblical Literature,* LI [1932], p. 81).

The concept of God's placing a mark upon His people goes back to Ezekiel's vision of the man with the writer's inkhorn who was commanded to "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in" Jerusalem. By virtue of the mark they were to be saved from destruction. (Eze. 9:2–6.) The concept of sealing is also applied in other circumstances. Paul referred the figure to the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit in connection with conversion and baptism (see 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30). Jesus spoke of Himself as being sealed by the Father, doubtless with reference to the Father's attestation of Him through the Holy Spirit at His baptism (see on John 6:27).

The symbolism of sealing finds an interesting parallel in Jewish eschatological thinking. One of the Psalms of Solomon (a pseudepigraphical work from about the middle of the 1st century B.C.) declares of the righteous that "the flame of fire and the wrath against the unrighteous shall not touch him, when it goeth forth from the face of the Lord against sinners, to destroy all the substance of sinners, for the mark of God is upon the righteous that they may be saved. Famine and sword and pestilence (shall be) far from the righteous" (15:6–8; R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 646). The Jews thus conceived of the mark on the righteous as keeping them from the perils of the time of the coming of the Messiah.

Similarly the present passage points to a sealing of God's people that prepares them to stand through the fearful times of stress that will precede the second advent (see on Rev. 7:1). As in ancient times a seal on an object testified to its ownership, so the seal of

God upon His people proclaims that He has recognized them as His own (see 2 Tim. 2:19; cf. TM 446).

The seal to be affixed upon God's faithful servants is "the pure mark of truth," the "mark" of His "approval" (3T 267). It attests "likeness to Christ in character" (EGW Supplementary Material on v. 2). "The seal of God, the token or sign of His authority, is found in the fourth commandment" (EGW ST Nov. 1, 1899; cf. GC 640). For a more detailed discussion of the seal see on Eze. 9:4.

Living God. See on ch. 1:18.

3. Till we have sealed. See on v. 2.

The servants. Gr. *douloi*, "slaves." Those who are sealed are God's slaves, and the seal upon them is His attestation that they are indeed His own.

Foreheads. In vision John probably saw an actual mark affixed. The mark stands for character qualification (see on Eze. 9:4; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19).

4. I heard. The information came to John orally. Whether at this time he saw the company of the sealed, the prophecy does not state.

An hundred and forty and four thousand. Regarding this number two views have been held: (1) that it is literal; (2) that it is symbolic. Some of those who hold that the number is literal point out that the numbering may be by a system such as that employed in the numbering of the 5,000 who were miraculously fed, where only the men and not the women and children were counted (see Matt. 14:21). Those who hold that the number is symbolic point out that the vision is clearly symbolic, and that inasmuch as the other symbols are not to be literally interpreted neither need this one be. Twelve is considered by many Bible students a significant number in the Bible, doubtless because there were 12 tribes in Israel (see Ex. 24:4; 28:21; Lev. 24:5; Num. 13; 17:2; Joshua 4:9; 1 Kings 4:7; 18:31; Matt. 10:1; Rev. 12:1; 21:12, 14, 16, 21; 22:2). The twelvefold repetition of the number 12,000 (Rev. 7:5–8) may suggest that the principal aim of this passage is not to disclose the precise number of the sealed but to show the distribution of the sealed among the tribes of spiritual Israel.

The 144,000 are here presented as those who are "able to stand" through the terrible events portrayed in ch. 6:17 (see comment there). They have the "seal of the living God" (ch. 7:2) and are protected in the time of universal destruction, as were those who possessed the mark in Ezekiel's vision (Eze. 9:6). They are approved of Heaven, for John later sees them with the Lamb on Mt. Zion (Rev. 14:1). They are declared to be without guile and without fault (Rev. 14:5). John hears them singing a song that "no man could learn" (Rev. 14:3). They are designated as "first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4).

There are differences of opinion as to precisely who from the last generation of the saints will constitute the 144,000. Lack of more definite information such as would be needed to arrive at dogmatic conclusions on certain points has led many to give emphasis, not to *who* the 144,000 are, but *what* they are—that is, the kind of character God expects them to possess—and to the importance of preparing to belong to that guileless throng. The following counsel may be apropos: "It is not His [God's] will that they shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand. This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question" (EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 14:1–4; cf. PK 189).

All the tribes. Twelve tribes are listed here (vs. 5–8), but they are not entirely identical with the enumerations found in the OT (see Num. 1:5–15; Deut. 27:12, 13; cf. Gen. 35:22–26; 49:3–28; 1 Chron. 2:1, 2). The OT lists commonly begin with Reuben, whereas the present enumeration begins with Judah, perhaps because Christ came of the tribe of Judah (see Rev. 5:5). In the OT, Levi is sometimes not included as a tribe, though, of course, he is listed as a son of Jacob. This was doubtless because Levi received no inheritance among the tribes (see on Joshua 13:14). Here the tribe of Levi is counted, but not that of Dan. To reckon Levi and yet retain the number 12 it was necessary to omit one of the tribes, inasmuch as Joseph was reckoned as two tribes, namely Ephraim (probably called "Joseph" in Rev. 7:8) and Manasseh. Perhaps Dan was excluded because of that tribe's reputation for idolatry (Judges 18:30, 31).

The order in which the tribes are listed here is different from any OT list. Some have pointed out that if vs. 7 and 8 are placed between vs. 5 and 6, the tribes follow in the order of Leah's sons, Rachel's sons, Leah's handmaid's sons, and Rachel's handmaid's sons—except for Dan, in whose place appears Manasseh. However, no particular point is gained by the rearrangement.

The names of some of the tribes are not spelled the same as in the OT. This is because the NT names are transliterated from the Greek, whereas the OT names are transliterated from the Hebrew. Greek transliterations of Hebrew names are often inexact because the Greek alphabet lacks certain sounds common in Hebrew.

Israel. Those who insist that the 144,000 are literal Jews contend that the application to Christians as spiritual Israel cannot be reconciled with the division into 12 specific tribes. However, if "children of Israel" must be taken literally, what reason is there for not taking vs. 5–8 and ch. 14:1–5 literally as well? Aside from the fact that the Jews have long lost their tribal distinctions, the fantastically remote likelihood of an actual identical number being redeemed from each tribe—but not a single soul from Dan—and the requirement that they all be celibates (ch. 14:4) would put too great a strain on one's credulity. If, however, the 144,000 are not literal Jews but figurative Israelites, spiritual Israel, the Christian church, then the tribal divisions and other details are also figurative, and the difficulties vanish.

These Israelites thus sealed are then to be understood as belonging to spiritual Israel, the Christian church (see Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7; Gal. 3:28, 29; 6:16; cf. Gal. 4:28; 1 Peter 1:1; see on Phil. 3:3). Spiritual Israel, in Bible figure, is represented as also being divided into 12 tribes, for the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem have engraved upon them the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (see Rev. 21:12).

9. After this. See on ch. 4:1.

A great multitude. From early Christian times commentators have been in disagreement regarding the relationship of this multitude to the 144,000. Three principal views have been held.

One view holds that the 144,000 and the "great multitude" of the present verse both describe the same group, but under different conditions, and that vs. 9–17 reveal the true identity of the 144,000. According to this view, vs. 1–8 portray the sealing of the 144,000 to prepare them to stand through the terrors that attend the coming of the Messiah, whereas vs. 9–17 show them afterward rejoicing about the throne of God in peace and triumph. Those who hold this view believe that the apparent differences between the description of the "great multitude" and that of the 144,000 are not differences, but

explanations: thus the fact that the "great multitude" cannot be numbered, they take as implying that the number 144,000 is symbolic rather than literal. The fact that the multitude is from all nations, and not from Israel alone, as the 144,000 are presented as originating from, they understand as meaning that the Israel from which the 144,000 come is not literal Israel, but spiritual, embracing all nations of Gentiles.

A second view emphasizes the differences between the 144,000 and the "great multitude." One is numbered, the other cannot be. One represents a special group, "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (ch. 14:4), the other, the remaining triumphant saints of all ages.

A third view represents the "great multitude" as the entire company of the redeemed, including the 144,000.

Seventh-day Adventists have generally favored the second view.

The throne. See on ch. 4:2.

The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

White robes. See on ch. 6:11; cf. ch. 7:13.

Palms. These were symbols of rejoicing and victory (see 1 Macc. 13:51; 2 Macc. 10:7; John 12:13).

10. Salvation to our God. This is a recognition by the numberless multitude that God and the Lamb have redeemed them. The sense of the original is conveyed well by the RSV: "'Salvation belongs to our God.'" The ascription to both God and the Lamb is significant evidence of their equality (see on ch. 5:13).

Which sitteth. See on ch. 4:2.

11. Elders. See on ch. 4:4. Although various scenes have intervened since the scene in ch. 4, the general setting is much the same.

Four beasts. See on ch. 4:6.

Fell. See ch. 5:8.

12. Amen. See on ch. 5:14.

Blessing. This is a sevenfold doxology as in ch. 5:12 (see comment there and on v. 13). Here again, as in ch. 5:8–14, is a vision of the vindication of God and Christ. Upon the testimony of the saved, the hosts of heaven are again reminded that God is wise and righteous. They worship Him with blessing, glory, thanksgiving, and honor.

13. One of the elders. See on ch. 4:4.

Answered. The elder puts into words the question that was doubtless already in John's mind.

What are these? Rather, "Who are these?" The question may be raised as to which group, the 144,000 (v. 4) or the "great multitude" (v. 9), the elder here has in view. Two views regarding this are held: (1) That reference is to the 144,000. Those who hold this view advance the argument that John already knew the identity of the "great multitude," for he had stated that it was from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Therefore they urge that in order for the question raised by the elder to be intelligible, he must have reference to the 144,000. (2) That reference is to the "great multitude." Those who hold this view point out that beginning with v. 9 an entirely new scene of the vision opens, and that reference back to a previous scene would hardly be expected unless specific indication of it were made. They contend, further, that the "great multitude" has not been identified any more clearly than the 144,000. Finally, they call attention to the fact that the elder speaks specifically of those who "are arrayed in white robes"; in the

context it is the "great multitude" that is described as "clothed with white robes" (v. 9). This view may be held either on the assumption that the "great multitude" comprehends all the redeemed, including the 144,000, or the redeemed exclusive of that group. See AA 602; GC 649; MH 507.

14. Great tribulation. Literally, "the great tribulation." Those who hold that vs. 13–17 apply to the 144,000 (see on v. 13) understand the tribulation to be the time of trouble preceding the second advent of Christ mentioned in Dan. 12:1. Those who hold that vs. 13–17 refer to the great multitude apply the "great tribulation" more generally to the various periods of tribulation the saints have experienced down through the centuries, or, more specifically, to the tribulation portrayed by the symbols of Rev. 6 (cf. Matt. 24:21). Compare on Rev. 3:10.

Washed their robes. The reason for the purity of the robes is given. The saints are triumphant, not on their own account, but because of the victory won by Christ on Calvary (cf. on ch. 6:11). The close connection between righteousness and victory—both symbolized by white garments (cf. on ch. 3:4; cf. ch. 1:5)—is demonstrated here. The battle is against sin; righteousness is the victory; Christ's righteousness has won the victory; and upon accepting His righteousness sinners become both righteous and victorious.

15. Therefore. The righteous, victorious state of this blessed company makes it possible for those who comprise the group to stand continually in the presence of God. If their robes were not white, they could not abide His presence.

Before the throne. See on ch. 4:2. This group is constantly in the presence of God. Theirs is the joy of always being with Him who has saved them.

Serve him. The keenest delight of the saved is to do the will of God.

Day and night. See on ch. 4:8.

Temple. Gr. *naos*, a word emphasizing the temple as the dwelling place of God (see on ch. 3:12).

Shall dwell. Gr. *skēnoō* (see on John 1:14). The clause may be translated, "He will pitch his tent [or, "tabernacle"] over them." Casting his words into the future tense, the elder looks forward to the endless ages of eternity, throughout which the saved may be confident that God will indeed dwell in their midst. Never shall they be deprived of His presence, His sustenance, and His favor. To be without the presence of God is utter loss; to have Him dwell among us is salvation evermore.

16. Hunger no more. This verse seems to allude to Isa. 49:10, where abundance was promised the returning exiles. The promise will find ultimate fulfillment in the experience of spiritual Israel.

17. The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

Midst of the throne. In ch. 5:6 the Lamb is portrayed as the closest of all to the throne of God.

Shall feed. Gr. *poimainō*, "to shepherd" (cf. on ch. 2:27). Although it is usually the lamb that is shepherded, here the Lamb is revealed as the true shepherd (cf. John 10:11). The thought of the present passage is probably drawn from Isa. 40:11.

Living fountains of waters. For this figure see Jer. 2:13; John 4:14; Rev. 22:1.

Wipe away all tears. This is a figure of speech signifying that in the future world there will be no cause for tears. Some have interpreted this figure rather literally, as

though for a time there will be occasion for tears because of the absence of loved ones. This cannot be proved. Dogmatic conclusions on this subject should be based on more than a figurative expression.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 EW 36; LS 117; 5T 152, 573; 6T 426; 7T 220
1–3Ev 704; EW 38, 58; LS 118; TM 444, 510; 5T 717; 6T 14, 61, 408
2 GC 613, 640
2, 3 EW 48, 67, 71; ML 308; PK 591; 5T 475
3 5T 214, 216
4 1T 59; 3T 266
9 SR 421; 6T 20
9, 10 AA 602; GC 665; MH 507; ML 348; 4T 125; 8T 44; 9T 267
9–12PK 720
10 CT 532; GC 650; SR 422; 5T 385; 6T 368
12 GC 651
14 EW 17; GC 428, 677; LS 67, 271; ML 321, 346, 348; 1T 61, 78, 155; 2T 60; 3T 45, 183; 4T 72, 324, 387, 429; 5T 215, 632; 9T 285, 286
14, 15 MB 31
14–17AA 602; Ed 303; GC 649; MH 507; 4T 125; 8T 44; 9T 268
15 DA 302
15–17DA 332
17 CH 244; DA 632; ML 342; SR 431; TM 124; 5T 301

CHAPTER 8

1 *At the opening of the seventh seal,* 2 *seven angels had seven trumpets given them.* 6 *Four of them sound their trumpets, and great plagues follow.* 3 *Another angel puteth incense to the prayers of the saints on the golden altar.*

1. Seventh seal. Chapter 6 portrays the opening of the first six of the seven seals. Chapter 7 is parenthetical in that it interrupts the opening of the seals to show that God has a true people who will be able to stand through the terrors that have been portrayed (see on ch. 6:17). Now the vision returns to the opening of the seals.

Silence in heaven. In contrast with the spectacular events that follow the opening of the other seals, an awesome silence follows the opening of the seventh. This silence has been explained in at least two ways. Some hold that this silence in heaven, following upon the terrible events that take place on earth immediately preceding the second coming (ch. 6:14–16), is caused by the heavenly hosts' having left the celestial courts to accompany Christ to the earth (see Matt. 25:31).

Another view explains this silence in heaven to be a silence of awesome expectation (cf. references to silence in EW 15, 16; DA 693). Thus far the heavenly courts have been portrayed as filled with praise and song. Now all is quiet, in awesome expectancy of the things that are about to occur. So understood, this silence of the seventh seal forms a bridge between the opening of the seals and the blowing of the trumpets, for it implies that with the seventh seal the revelation is not complete—there is still more to be explained concerning God's program of events in the great controversy with evil (see on v. 5).

Half an hour. Some interpreters have understood this in terms of the prophetic time formula of a day representing a literal year (see on Dan. 7:25). On this basis "half an

hour" would be equal to about one literal week (cf. EW 16). Others hold that there is no clear warrant in Scripture for taking as prophetic time any period less than a whole day, and so have preferred to understand "for the space of half an hour" as signifying simply a short period of unspecified length. Seventh-day Adventists have generally favored the first view.

2. I saw. See on ch. 4:1.

The seven angels. Although he has nowhere previously mentioned these seven angels, John evidently takes for granted that their identity is sufficiently established by the statement of the fact that they are "the seven angels which stood before God."

Stood. Rather, "stand."

Seven trumpets. In the present vision the seven angels blow their trumpets to announce forthcoming divine judgments (see on vs. 5, 6).

3. Another angel. That is, not one of the seven angels with the trumpets.

The altar. Compare Ex. 30:1–10.

Censer. Compare Lev. 10:1.

Much incense. See Ex. 30:34–38.

With the prayers. The picture is that of the angel adding incense to the prayers of the saints as these prayers ascend to the throne of God. The scene portrayed may be understood as symbolic of the ministration of Christ for His people (see Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1; cf. PP 356; GC 414, 415; EW 32, 252). Christ, as intercessor, mingles His merits with the prayers of the saints, which are thereby made acceptable with God.

4. Smoke of the incense. See on v. 3.

5. Filled it with fire. A change suddenly comes in the scene of intercession. Once more the angel fills his censer with coals of fire, but adds no incense.

Cast it into the earth. The meaning of this act is significant for the understanding of what follows as the trumpets are blown. Two interpretations may be suggested.

According to the view that Seventh-day Adventists have favored, the cessation of the angel's ministry at the altar of incense is symbolic of the end of the ministration of Christ for mankind—the close of probation. The voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquake that ensue when the angel casts the censer into the earth describe events to take place at the end of the seventh trumpet, following the opening of the temple (ch. 11:19), and at the seventh plague, when a voice comes from the temple declaring, "It is done" (ch. 16:17).

Some prefer to see ch. 8:3–5, not so much in its chronological, as in its logical, relationship to the seals and the trumpets. This view agrees with the preceding one that the ministry of the angel at the altar of incense is representative of Christ's intercession for His people throughout the Christian Era. But it emphasizes the fact that the prayers of the saints are seen ascending, and interprets the significance of these prayers in terms of the prayers of the martyrs revealed under the fifth seal: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (ch. 6:10). Not only was this the prayer of the martyrs, it was also the theme of the prayers of all God's children who suffered under the horrors portrayed when the seals were opened. Thus when the prayers of ch. 8:3 are taken in the setting of the seals, the action of the angel in throwing a censer of fire unmixed with incense into the earth may be seen as symbolizing that these prayers are now being answered. In ch. 6:11 the suffering saints were given a temporary answer in that they were told to wait until the number of martyrs

was made up. Now the real answer to their prayer comes. God's wrath against the persecutors of His people is not withheld forever. Finally it is poured out, and without benefit of the intercession of Christ. The trumpets are regarded as portraying these judgments. This second view attempts to tie together the seals and trumpets by setting forth the trumpets to be the answer of God to the events portrayed under the seals.

Voices. For repetitions of these portents see chs. 11:19; 16:18; cf. above on "cast it into the earth."

6. Seven angels. See on v. 2.

Seven trumpets. See on v. 2. A number of views have been set forth as to the interpretation of the successive scenes that follow the blowing of the trumpets.

One view of the trumpets is based on the assumption that since the symbolization of v. 5 points to the end of Christ's intercession, the events that follow might logically be taken to represent judgments of God poured out on the earth after the close of probation. According to this view these judgments parallel the seven last plagues (ch. 16). The proponents of this view point to certain aspects of each of the trumpets that find similar features in each of the plagues.

According to another view the seven trumpets should not be thought of chronologically, but as symbolic of the divine answer to the prayers of God's suffering people of all ages. In other words, this interpretation sees the trumpets as God's reassurance to His persecuted saints that in spite of the wars, plagues, famines, and death through which they may pass, He has not lost control of the world. He is still judge and will punish unrighteous men. See on v. 5.

The view favored by Seventh-day Adventists is that these trumpets retrace, to a large extent, the period of Christian history already covered by the seven churches (chs. 2; 3) and the seven seals (chs. 6; 8:1), and that they emphasize outstanding political and military events during this period. These events will be discussed below in the comments on the various trumpets.

7. Hail and fire. The picture here is that of a great storm of hail mixed with lightning, reminiscent of the seventh plague in Egypt (Ex. 9:22–25).

Earth. The earth, with its vegetation, is shown as the particular target of this scourge (cf. ch. 16:2). The scourge is singularly descriptive of the invasion of the Roman Empire by the Visigoths under Alaric. This was the first of the Teutonic incursions into the Roman Empire that played such an important part in its final downfall. Beginning about A.D. 396, the Visigoths overran Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece in the eastern part of the empire. Later they crossed the Alps and pillaged the city of Rome in A.D. 410. They also ravaged much of what is now France and ultimately settled in Spain.

Third part. This fraction occurs repeatedly in the Revelation (see vs. 8, 9, 11, 12; chs. 9:15, 18; 12:4; cf. Zech. 13:8, 9). It probably implies a substantial part, but not a major portion.

All green grass. The severity of this tempest is dramatized by showing it as destroying much of the vegetation of the earth.

8. As it were. John apparently finds in a burning mountain the closest representation of the scene that takes place before his eyes. The figure of "burning mountains" occurs in Jewish apocalyptic literature (see Enoch 18:13; R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 200), but there is no evidence that John derived from that source his description of the phenomenon he now sees. Compare Jer.

51:25, where the prophet describes Babylon as a "destroying mountain" that will be made a "burnt mountain."

Sea. The sea, with the life in it and upon it, is shown as the special object of this judgment (cf. ch. 16:3).

The catastrophe announced by the second trumpet has been seen as describing the depredations of the Vandals. Driven from their settlements in Thrace by the incursions of the Huns from Central Asia, the Vandals migrated through Gaul (now France) and Spain into Roman North Africa and established a kingdom centering around Carthage. From there they dominated the western Mediterranean with a navy of pirates, pillaging the coasts of Spain, Italy, and even Greece, and preying upon Roman shipping. The high point of their depredations came in A.D. 455, when for two weeks they looted and pillaged the city of Rome.

Third part. See on v. 7.

Sea became blood. This judgment is reminiscent of the first plague in Egypt (Ex. 7:20). In the second plague (Rev. 16:3) the sea "became as the blood of a dead man." "Blood" here doubtless implies wholesale human slaughter.

9. Creatures. Gr. *ktismata*, "things created." The Greek word does not necessarily imply life, hence the qualification "which … had life." See Ex. 7:21.

Life. Gr. *psuchai* (see on Matt. 10:28).

10. Fell a great star. This has been interpreted as portraying the invasion and ravages of the Huns under the leadership of their king Attila, in the 5th century. Entering Europe from Central Asia about A.D. 372, the Huns first settled along the lower Danube. Three quarters of a century later they were on the move again, and for a brief period raised havoc in various regions of the tottering Roman Empire. Crossing the Rhine in A.D. 451, they were stopped by combined Roman and German troops at Chalôns in northern Gaul. After a short period of marauding in Italy, Attila died in A.D. 453, and almost immediately the Huns disappeared from history. In spite of the short period of their ascendancy, so rapacious were the Huns in their devastations that their name has come down through history as synonymous with the worst slaughter and destruction.

Lamp. Gr. *lampas*, here probably meaning a torch (see on Matt. 25:1).

Third part. See on v. 7.

The rivers. This judgment falls upon the sources of fresh water, as contrasted with the salt-water bodies affected under the previous trumpet (v. 8; cf. ch. 16:4).

11. Name. As the "name" often denotes a characteristic of that to which it is attached, the name of this star may be taken as descriptive of the judgment that falls under this trumpet (see on Acts 3:16).

Wormwood. Gr. *apsinthos*, a notoriously bitter herb, *Artemisia absinthium*. In the present passage the waters themselves become wormwood.

12. Third part. See on v. 7.

The sun. The sun, moon, and stars have been interpreted to represent the great luminaries of the Western Roman government—its emperors, senators, and consuls. With the removal of its last emperor, in 476, the extinction of Western Rome began (see pp. 21, 22; cf. p. 111). Later, its senate and consulship came to an end.

Shone not for a third part. The thought seems to be that these bodies would be smitten during one third of the time of their shining, not that one third of the bodies

themselves would be smitten so that they would shine with two-thirds brilliance. Thus one third of the day and one third of the night would be dark. Applied to the divisions of the Roman government, the figure may describe the successive extinction of the emperors, senators, and consuls.

13. I beheld. See on ch. 4:1. This temporary break in the sequence of the trumpets calls special attention to the last three, which are specially designated as "woes."

An angel. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "an eagle." The eagle may be thought of as an omen of doom (see Matt. 24:28; cf. Deut. 28:49; Hosea 8:1; Hab. 1:8).

Midst of heaven. That is, at the zenith, so that all may hear his message.

Woe, woe, woe. The woe is repeated three times because of the three judgments yet to come at the blowing of the three remaining trumpets. Each of these is designated a "woe" (see chs. 9:12; 11:14).

Inhabiters of the earth. That is, the unrighteous (see on ch. 3:10).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 GC 414; PP 356; SR 377

3, 4 ChS 263; COL 156; DA 667; EW 32, 252; LS 100; ML 29; MYP 96; PP 353, 367; TM 93; 6T 368, 467; 8T 178

[3]

CHAPTER 9

1 *At the sounding of the fifth angel, a star falleth from heaven, to whom is given the key of the bottomless pit*. 2 *He openeth the pit, and there come forth locusts like scorpions*. 12 *The first woe past*. 13 *The sixth trumpet soundeth*. 14 *Four angels are let loose, that were bound*.

1. Fifth angel. The fifth trumpet is discussed in vs. 1–12. This trumpet is the first "woe" (see on ch. 8:13; cf. ch. 9:12, 13).

A star fall. Or, "a star fallen." The star depicted here is not seen falling, as under the third trumpet (ch. 8:10), but is shown already fallen upon the earth.

It is interesting to note in passing that the figure of a fallen star occurs also in Jewish apocalyptic literature to describe Satan as a star fallen from heaven (Enoch 88:1; R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 251).

To him was given. This implies that the power represented by the key was not intrinsically his, but was allowed to him by a higher power.

The key. Possession of the key implies the power to open and close (see Rev. 3:7; cf. Matt. 16:19).

A number of commentators have identified the fifth and sixth trumpets with the ravages of the Saracens and the Turks. They point to the wars between the Persians under Khosrau II (A.D. 590–628) and the Romans under Heraclius I (610–641) as weakening the two empires, thus preparing the way for the Moslem conquest. The key, they suggest, is the fall of Khosrau, whose overthrow and murder in A.D. 628 marked the end of the Persian Empire as an effective power and opened the way for the advance of the Arabian forces.

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[3]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 6:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Bottomless pit. Gr. *phrear tēs abussou*, "pit of the bottomless [place]," or "well of the abyss." The word *abussos* is used repeatedly in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *tehom* (see on Gen. 1:2, where *abussos* represents the primeval ocean). In Job 41:31 it represents the sea in general, and in Ps. 71:20, the depths of the earth. The *abussos* is also the abode of leviathan. Thus the LXX of Job 41:22, 23, 25 (vs. 31, 32, 34 of the Masoretic text) reads, "He [the dragon] makes the deep [*abussos*] boil like a brazen caldron; and he regards the sea as a pot of ointment, and the lowest part of the deep as a captive: he reckons the deep as his range. … He beholds every high thing: and he is king of all that are in the waters" (English trans. in Bagster's ed. of the LXX). With respect to the Arabs, the bottomless pit may be thought of as representing the vast wastes of the Arabian deserts, whence these followers of Mohammed issued forth, to spread their conquests over vast areas.

2. Bottomless pit. See on v. 1.

Darkened. Compare on ch. 6:12. Darkness is also a characteristic of the fifth plague (ch. 16:10). With respect to the Moslems, the darkening of the sun may be thought of as the obscuration of the sun of Christianity. Such was the effect of the spread of the religion of Islam.

3. Locusts. This visitation is reminiscent of the plague of locusts that infested Egypt (Ex. 10:13–15). As early as the 8th century A.D., Beatus, a Spanish monk, is said to have identified the symbol of the locusts with the Moslem Arabs, who in his day had just overrun North Africa, the Near East, and Spain. Since his time many expositors are on record as having made a similar identification.

As the scorpions. Normally locusts do not attack human beings, but these locusts are portrayed as having the venom of scorpions. Scorpions are described as hostile toward man (see Eze. 2:6; Luke 10:19; 11:12).

4. They should not hurt. Locusts destroy vegetation, not men. But these locusts are commanded not to harm any growing plant. Their attacks are to be directed only against unrighteous men.

Those who identify the locust symbol with the Saracens have suggested that this prohibition reflects the policy of the Arab conquerors not to destroy property wantonly or to kill Christians and Jews so long as they submitted to the payment of tribute. Concerning a certain class, Abu-bakr, Mohammed's successor, is recorded to have said to his soldiers: "'You will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter, till they either turn Mahometans or pay tribute'" (quoted in Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* J. B. Bury, ed., vol. 5, p. 416). This class has not been definitely identified.

When applied to the Moslem Arabs this restriction may be thought of as representing their policy of permitting the conquered to live. This course was adopted so that the conquered might support the warriors out on conquest.

Have not the seal. Some have suggested that inasmuch as the keeping of the Sabbath is ultimately to be the outward sign of the inner work of sealing by the Holy Spirit (see on Eze. 9:4), the ones attacked by the "locusts" here are those who do not observe the true Sabbath.

In their foreheads. See Eze. 9:4; Rev. 7:3.

5. Should not kill. The punishment inflicted by the locusts is pain, not death.

Five months. For a discussion of this period see Additional Note at end of chapter.

Scorpion. See on v. 3. The sting of a scorpion may be exceedingly painful, but it is seldom fatal to man.

6. Seek death. Compare the attitude of men here with that portrayed in ch. 6:16. See Job 3:21; cf. Jer. 8:3.

7. Shapes. Gr. *homoiōmata*, "likeness."

Like unto horses. See on Joel 2:4, of which this passage is reminiscent. Some see in the horses a reference to cavalry, a prominent feature of Arabian military forces.

Crowns. Gr. *stephanoi*, symbols of victory (see on ch. 2:10). Some see a reference here to the turban, which was long the national headdress of the Arabians.

Faces of men. Perhaps an implication that the agents of this visitation are human beings.

8. Hair of women. Some have applied this feature of the vision to the allegedly long hair worn by the Arabian troops.

Teeth of lions. This figure suggests strength and rapacity.

9. Breastplates of iron. The scales of the locusts may have suggested this description. The figure indicates the impregnability of the agents of this judgment.

Sound of chariots. Compare Joel 2:5.

10. Like unto scorpions. That is, like the tails of scorpions, which contain poisonous stings.

Hurt men. See on v. 5.

Five months. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

11. King over them. The wise man Agur declared that "the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Prov. 30:27). The locusts in the present passage, however, are more highly organized in their destructive work, for they have a ruler whose commands they follow. Some who apply the fifth and sixth trumpets to the Moslem Arabs and Turks see in this king a reference to Osman (Othman) I (1299–1326), the traditional founder of the Ottoman Empire. His first attack upon the Greek Empire, which, according to Gibbon, took place on July 27, 1299, they take as marking the beginning of the five-month period of torment (Rev. 9:7, 10). For a discussion of this period see Additional Note at end of chapter.

Angel. Or, "messenger," the one in charge of the forces issuing from the bottomless pit.

Bottomless pit. See on v. 1.

Abaddon. Gr. *Abaddōn*, a transliteration of the Heb. *'Abbadon*, "destruction," "ruin." This word is used with a general meaning in Job 31:12, and is paralleled with "hell" (Heb. *she'ol*, the figurative realm of the dead; see on Prov. 15:11) in Job 26:6. The use of a Hebrew name here is significant with respect to the fact that much of John's symbolism is of Hebrew and Jewish origin. In Jewish tradition *'Abbadon* is personified (see Talmud *Shabbath* 89a).

Greek tongue. John supplies a Greek name that translates *'Abbadon* for his Greek-speaking readers.

Apollyon. Gr. *Apolluōn*, "one who destroys," "a destroyer."

12. Woe. See on ch. 8:13.

13. Sixth angel. That is, the second woe (see on chs. 8:13; 11:14; cf. ch. 9:12).

Four horns. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading "horns." For the horns on the altar of incense in the ancient wilderness tabernacle see Ex. 37:26.

The golden altar. Doubtless the same altar as the one where the angel had ministered the prayers of the saints (ch. 8:3–5).

14. Four angels. Previously the prophet had seen four angels that had power to restrain the winds from blowing (ch. 7:1). They had worldwide power; the present four appear to be localized.

Most commentators who interpret the fifth trumpet as applying to the Saracens have seen the Turks in the sixth. Some of these identify the four angels as four sultanies of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire, which they identify as Aleppo, Iconium, Damascus, and Baghdad. Others see in these angels the destructive forces that moved against the Western world.

Are bound. Literally, "have been bound." These angels have been restrained from their work of judgment until the sixth angel sounds his trumpet.

Euphrates. Commentators who apply the sixth trumpet to the Turks generally give a literal interpretation to the Euphrates, in the sense that it was from the region of the Euphrates that the Turks entered the Byzantine Empire. But inasmuch as the names Sodom, Egypt (ch. 11:8), and Babylon (chs. 14:8; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) are used symbolically in the Revelation, other commentators hold that the Euphrates should also be understood symbolically (see on ch. 16:12). Some of these note that, to the Israelites, the Euphrates constituted the northern boundary of the land which ideally they were to occupy (Deut. 1:7, 8) and which, at the height of their power, they dominated, at least to some extent (see on 1 Kings 4:21). Beyond the Euphrates were the heathen nations of the north who repeatedly swept down and engulfed Israel (cf. on Jer. 1:14). According to this point of view the Euphrates here indicates a boundary beyond which God holds the forces that accomplish His judgment under the sixth trumpet.

Still others connect the Euphrates with mystical Babylon. They point out that inasmuch as later in the Revelation the final apostasy is portrayed as mystic Babylon (ch. 17:5) and that particular attention is called to its sitting "upon many waters" (v. 1), and inasmuch as historical Babylon was literally situated upon the waters of the Euphrates (see Vol. IV, p. 796), the Euphrates is here symbolic of the domain of the power represented as mystic Babylon (cf. on ch. 16:12).

15. Four angels. See on v. 14.

For an hour. Concerning the expression "for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" see Additional Note at end of chapter; cf. on ch. 17:12.

Third part. See on ch. 8:7.

16. Army of the horsemen. The four angels are portrayed as wreaking their judgments by means of a great army of cavalry. In ancient times the cavalry was the swiftest, most mobile branch of an army. Therefore, here, it may be thought of as symbolizing the rapidity and scope with which this visitation comes.

Two hundred thousand thousand. That is, two hundred million. The number is doubtless symbolic of a vast, innumerable host.

I heard. The syntax of this statement in Greek may imply that John heard this number and understood its significance. Oral information confirmed his impression of a numberless throng.

17. I saw. The description of the horses and their riders seems to follow the familiar Hebrew inverted parallelism: first the horses, then the riders are mentioned; then the riders are described, and finally the horses.

Breastplates. That is, of the riders.

Of fire. That is, fiery. Perhaps not only the armor of the cavalrymen appeared bright, but the troops themselves may have appeared to the prophet as clothed with fire. See below on "jacinth."

Jacinth. Gr. *huakinthinos*, a violet or dark-blue color. Some suggest that this may represent the smoke accompanying the fire (see below on "fire and smoke and brimstone"). Others see the color as descriptive of the Turkish uniform, in which the colors red (or scarlet), blue, and yellow are said to have predominated. The fire, they believe, represents the red color, and the brimstone the yellow.

Brimstone. Gr. *theiōdeis*, "sulphurous," "of brimstone." Fire and brimstone are frequently mentioned together in the book of Revelation (chs. 9:18; 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). For a possible significance of the color see the foregoing on "jacinth."

Heads of lions. This comparison of the "horsemen" to the king of beasts suggests ferocity and majesty.

Fire and smoke and brimstone. The same things that appeared to clothe the cavalrymen also come forth from the mouths of their horses. The mention of "smoke" here in place of the "jacinth" of the horsemen strengthens the suggestion that the two are the same (see the foregoing on "jacinth"). Compare the description of leviathan in Job 41:19–21. Expositors who identify the sixth trumpet with the ravages of the Ottoman Turks see in the "fire and smoke and brimstone" a reference to the use of gunpowder and firearms, introduced about this time. They point out that the discharge of a musket by a mounted cavalryman could make it appear from a distance as if fire were coming out of the horse's mouth.

18. These three. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "these three plagues." The fact that these judgments are called plagues is taken by some as suggesting that a close parallel exists between the trumpets and the seven last plagues (see on ch. 8:6).

Third part. See on ch. 8:7.

Fire … smoke … brimstone. See on v. 17.

19. Mouth. John has already depicted these horses as killing men by the fire, smoke, and brimstone that issue from their mouths (see on v. 17).

Tails. These horses wreak havoc both with their heads and with their tails. Compare the locusts of the fifth trumpet, whose stings were in their tails (v. 10). With respect to the Turks, certain expositors see in these "tails" a reference to a horse's tail as a Turkish standard.

20. Rest of the men. The majority of men were not destroyed by this horrible visitation, but in spite of what their fellow men had suffered they did not take the lesson to heart as they should have done, and repent.

Works of their hands. Particularly the idols they had made (see Deut. 4:28; Ps. 135:15; Jer. 1:16). In modern days men who give to the structures of their own inventive genius greater importance in their lives than they do to God and His kingdom, stand

equally condemned. While good in themselves, modern creature comforts—the works of men's hands—may often fill men's lives so fully that they become idols as much as the ancient gods of wood, stone, and metal ever were. Compare on 1 John 5:21.

Devils. Gr. *daimonia*, "demons" (see on 1 Cor. 10:20). This refers to the worship of spirits, common in ancient times and still widely practiced among many heathen groups.

Idols. As contrasted with the worship of spirits, this condemns the worship of concrete, but inanimate, objects.

Gold. Gold, silver, brass, stone, wood, are listed in the descending order of their value as materials.

Neither can see. The folly of idolatry is dramatized by the fact that these objects, worshiped as gods, have not even the common powers of an animal, much less a man (see Ps. 115:4–7; Jer. 10:5; Dan. 5:23).

21. Murders. The sin of idolatry against God often leads to crimes such as those here listed (see Rev. 21:8; 22:15; cf. Gal. 5:20).

Sorceries. See on ch. 18:23.

Fornication. Gr. *porneia*, "prostitution," "unchastity," a general term denoting every imaginable kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.

Thefts. See 1 Cor. 6:10.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 9

One of the first Biblical expositors on record to identify the Turks as the power portrayed under the sixth trumpet was the Swiss reformer, Heinrich Bullinger (d. A.D. 1575), although Martin Luther had already set forth this trumpet as symbolic of Moslems. However, on the dating of this trumpet, as of the fifth, commentators have shown wide divergence, although the decided majority of expositors have assigned dates for the fifth trumpet during the period in which the Saracens were in the ascendancy, and for the sixth trumpet during the heyday of either the Seljuk or the Ottoman Turks.

In 1832 William Miller made a new approach to the dating of these trumpets by connecting them chronologically (in the fifth of a series of articles in the Vermont *Telegraph*). On the basis of the year-day principle (see on Dan. 7:25), Miller calculated the five months of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:5) to be 150 literal years, and the hour, day, month, and year of the sixth to be 391 years and 15 days. Many expositors before Miller had adopted these same calculations, but they had not connected the two periods chronologically. Miller set forth the view that the time period of the sixth trumpet followed immediately upon that of the fifth, so as to make the entire period one of 541 years and 15 days. This period he dated from A.D. 1298, when he considered the first attack by the Ottoman Turks on the Byzantine Empire occurred, to 1839. Thus, according to his view, both trumpets represented the Ottoman Turks, the fifth, their rise and the sixth, their period of domination.

In 1838 Josiah Litch, one of Miller's associates in the second advent movement in America, revised Miller's dates to A.D. 1299 to 1449 for the fifth trumpet, and 1449 to 1840 for the sixth. Litch accepted the date July 27, 1299, for the battle of Bapheum, near Nicomedia, which he took as the first attack by the Ottoman Turks on the Byzantine Empire. He saw the date 1449 as significant of the collapse of Byzantine power, for toward the end of 1448 a new Byzantine emperor, Constantine Palaeologus, had requested permission of the Turkish sultan Murad II before daring to ascend his throne,

and he did not, in fact, receive the crown until January 6, 1449, after such permission had been granted. Litch believed that this 150-year period constituted the time during which the Ottoman Turks "tormented" (see v. 5) the Byzantine Empire.

As already stated, Litch set 1299 as the beginning of the fifth trumpet, to be more exact, July 27, 1299, his date for the battle of Bapheum. He gave to this fifth trumpet a period of 150 years. This brought him to July 27, 1449, for the beginning of the sixth trumpet. Adding on 391 years brought him to July 27, 1840. The 15 days carried him over into the month of August of that year. He predicted that in that month the power of the Turkish Empire would be overthrown. However, at the outset he did not fix on a precise day in August. A short time before the expiration of this period he declared that the Turkish Empire would be broken August 11, which is exactly 15 days beyond July 27, 1840.

At that time world attention was directed to events taking place in the Turkish Empire. In June, 1839, Mohammed Ali, pasha of Egypt and nominally a vassal of the sultan, had rebelled against his overlord. He defeated the Turks and captured their navy. At this juncture Mahmud II, the sultan, died, and the ministers of his successor, Abdul Mejid, proposed a settlement to Mohammed Ali by which he would receive the hereditary pashalik of Egypt, and his son Ibrahim, the rulership of Syria. However, Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, who all had interests in the Near East, intervened at this point and insisted that no agreement between the Turks and Mohammed Ali be made without their consultation. Negotiations were protracted until the summer of 1840, when, on July 15, Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia signed the Treaty of London, proposing to back with force the terms suggested the previous year by the Turks. It was about this time that Litch announced that he anticipated Turkish power to come to an end on August 11. On that day the Turkish emissary, Rifat Bey, arrived at Alexandria with the terms of the London Convention. On that day also the ambassadors of the four powers received a communication from the sultan inquiring as to what measures were to be taken in reference to a circumstance vitally affecting his empire. He was told that "provision had been made," but he could not know what it was. Litch interpreted these events as a recognition by the Turkish government that its independent power was gone.

These events, coming at the specified time of Litch's prediction, exercised a wide influence upon the thinking of those in America who were interested in the Millerite movement. Indeed, this prediction by Litch went far to give credence to other, as yet unfulfilled, time prophecies—particularly that of the 2300 days—which were being preached by the Millerites. Thus this occurrence in 1840 was a significant factor in building up the expectation of the second advent three years later (see GC 334, 335).

It should be made clear, however, that commentators and theologians in general have been greatly divided over the meaning of the 5th and 6th trumpets. This has been due principally to problems in three areas: (1) the meaning of the symbolism itself; (2) the meaning of the Greek; (3) the historical events and dates involved. But to canvass adequately these problems would carry us beyond the space limits permissible in this commentary.

Generally speaking, the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of the fifth and sixth trumpets, particularly as touching the time period involved, is essentially that of Josiah Litch.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5, 14, 15 GC 334

CHAPTER 10

1 *A mighty strong angel appeareth with a book open in his hand*. 6 *He sweareth by him that liveth for ever, that there shall be no more time*. 9 *John is commanded to take and eat the book*.

1. I saw. See on chs. 1:1; 4:1. Chapters 10:1 to 11:14 constitute a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This parenthesis is similar to that of ch. 7, which comes between the sixth and seventh seals.

Another mighty angel. That is, in addition to the angels who had earlier appeared. He is apparently distinct from the angels who hold the four winds (ch. 7:1), from those with the seven trumpets (ch. 8:2), from the angel at the altar (ch. 8:3), and from those in the river Euphrates (ch. 9:14). This angel may be identified as Christ (see EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 10:1–11). Here, as Lord of history, he makes the proclamation of v. 6.

Come down from heaven. Although the focus of the vision is now upon a heavenly being, its locale is still the earth.

Clothed. Gr. *periballō*, "to throw about," "to envelop," "to clothe." The angel is seen enveloped in a cloud. The Scriptures frequently associate clouds with appearances of Christ (see Dan. 7:13; Acts 1:9; Rev. 1:7; 14:14; cf. Ps. 104:3; 1 Thess. 4:17).

Rainbow. Compare Rev. 4:3; Eze. 1:26–28. The angel's face, "as it were the sun," shining through the cloud with which he is enveloped may be thought of as the occasion for the rainbow. Compare on Gen. 1:12, 13.

As it were the sun. Compare the description of Christ in ch. 1:16.

Feet. To compare feet to pillars appears incongruous, but the word "feet" (*podes*) is doubtless used here in the sense of the lower extremities, the legs and feet, which are likened to pillars of fire (cf. of S. Sol. 5:15; cf. on Eze. 1:7).

Pillars of fire. Compare the description of the feet of Christ in ch. 1:15.

2. In his hand. Compare the symbolism of Eze. 2:9.

A little book. Gr. *biblaridion*, "a little scroll." In the NT *biblaridion* appears only in the present chapter. As contrasted with the scroll (*biblion*) in the hand of God in ch. 5:1, this little scroll is distinctly smaller. Compare the symbolism of Eze. 2:9.

Open. The Greek implies that the book has been opened and still is open. By contrast, the previous scroll was sealed with seven seals (ch. 5:1). Daniel had been instructed to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (ch. 12:4). This admonition applies particularly to the part of Daniel's prophecies that deals with the last days (see on ch. 12:4), and doubtless especially to the time element of the 2300 days (ch. 8:14) as it relates to the preaching of the first, second, and third angels' messages (Rev. 14:6–12). Inasmuch as the message of the present angel deals with time, and presumably with events at the time of the end, when the book of Daniel was to be unsealed (Dan. 12:4), it seems reasonable to conclude that the little book open in the hand of the angel was the book of Daniel. With the presentation to John of the little book open, the sealed portions of Daniel's prophecy are revealed. The time element, pointing out the end of the 2300-day prophecy, is made clear. Consequently the present chapter focuses upon the

time when the proclamation of vs. 6, 7 was made, that is, during the years 1840 to 1844 (see on v. 6; see EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 10:1–11).

Upon the sea … on the earth. Sea and earth are used repeatedly to designate the world as a whole (see Ex. 20:4, 11; Ps. 69:34). The fact that the angel stands upon both sea and earth implies the worldwide proclamation of his message, and also his power and authority over the world.

3. Loud voice. Compare chs. 1:10; 5:2; 6:10; 7:2.

When a lion roareth. Only the deep, resounding note of the angel's voice is emphasized. What he said is not recorded.

Seven thunders. Another in the various series of sevens that characterize the Revelation (see on ch. 1:11).

4. I was about to write. John understands the voices of the seven thunders, and is prepared to record their message. The present passage indicates that John recorded the visions of the Revelation as they were shown him, and not at a later date.

Seal up. Like Daniel, long before, John is now hidden to "seal up" the revelation that had come to him (see Dan. 12:4). Paul also, in vision, had heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). The messages of the seven thunders obviously were not a revelation for the people of John's day. They doubtless revealed details of the messages that were to be proclaimed at "the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4; cf. on Rev. 10:2). Thus they may be understood as a portrayal of events that would occur in connection with the proclamation of the first and second angel's messages (ch. 14:6–8; see EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 10:1–11).

5. Lifted up his hand. A gesture characteristic of the utterance of an oath, in ancient times as now (see Gen. 14:22, 23; Deut. 32:40; Eze. 20:15; Dan. 12:7).

6. Liveth. Compare chs. 1:18; 4:9; 15:7.

Who created.. Compare Ex. 20:11; Ps. 146:6. No more solemn oath could be made (see Heb. 6:13). In swearing by the Creator, the angel, who is Christ (see on Rev. 10:1), swears by himself.

There should be time no longer. Gr. *chronos ouketi estai*, "time no more shall be." This cryptic declaration has been variously interpreted. Many expositors have understood it to mark the end of time, as such, and the beginning of eternity. Others have taken the word "time" in the sense of the time that elapses before the final events of history, and so have translated, "there shall be no more delay."

Seventh-day Adventists have generally understood these words to describe particularly the message proclaimed in the years 1840–1844 by William Miller and others in connection with the close of the 2300-day prophecy. They have understood the "time" to be prophetic time, and its end to signify the close of the longest time prophecy, that of the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14. After this there is to be no further message bearing on a definite time. No time prophecy extends beyond 1844.

7. Days. Some commentators have taken "days" here as prophetic year-days. Whether these are to be understood as days or years seems to make little difference, for the expression itself is general, and coming after the declaration of v. 6, they cannot specify a measurable time period (see on v. 6). The sense of the passage is that at the time of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God is to be completed. In God's plan this event was to follow upon the proclamation that "there should be time no longer" (v. 6). Compare the declaration under the seventh plague, "It is done" (ch. 16:17).

The seventh angel. See ch. 11:15–19 for events.

When he shall begin. Or, "when he shall sound." The seventh trumpet marks a climactic point in the great controversy between Christ and Satan, as revealed by the proclamation of the voices in heaven at that time (ch. 11:15).

The mystery of God. For comment on the word "mystery" see on Rev. 1:20; cf. on Rom. 11:25. Jesus used a similar phrase, "the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11), and Paul also speaks of "the mystery of God" (Col. 2:2) and "the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3). The mystery of God, that which He reveals to His children, is His purpose for them—the plan of redemption. Compare 1 Tim. 3:16; 6T 19.

Should be finished. See on ch. 11:15.

His servants the prophets. The declaration and exposition of the mystery of God (see the foregoing on "the mystery of God") has ever been the burden of His servants the prophets in their messages to men (see on Rom. 3:21).

8. The voice. Doubtless the voice that had forbidden John to write what had been declared by the seven thunders (v. 4), as shown by the repetition of the phrase "from heaven," and by the adverb "again."

Go and take. John is called upon to act a part in the vision.

The little book. See on v. 2.

Open. See on v. 2.

In the hand. See on v. 2.

The sea … earth. See on v. 2.

9. Give me. John is placed here in the position of expressing his desire for the book. He acts the part of those who proclaimed the advent message in the years 1840–1844. Though mistaken in expecting Christ to return in 1844, they nevertheless were led of God, and found the message of the near advent precious to their souls. Their computation of the time element in the prophecy of Dan. 8:14 was correct (see comment there), but they were mistaken as to the nature of the event to take place at the end of the 2300 days.

Eat it up.. Compare the symbolism in Eze. 3:1 (cf. Jer. 15:16). To eat up the book may be thought of as a figure of speech for comprehending fully the meaning of the message contained in the little roll. John's experience in Rev. 10:10 well describes that of the advent believers as they came more fully to understand the meaning of the three angel's messages (ch. 14:6–12) in relation to the true fulfillment of the 2300-day prophecy.

Make thy belly bitter. See on v. 10. The order of the elements in vs. 9 and 10 is a familiar form of Hebrew parallelism (see on chs. 1:2; 9:17).

"It shall be in thy belly bitter …"

"It shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey honey. …"

"It was in my mouth sweet as honey …"

"My belly was bitter."

In thy mouth sweet. See on v. 10.

10. I took. See on v. 10.

Sweet as honey. Compare Eze. 3:3. As in Ezekiel's experience, God's messages to His servants have often been a mixture of sweetness and bitterness, for they may reveal both His love and His judgments. Prophets of God have experienced both the ecstacy of divine vision and the bitterness of delivering messages of rebuke to men.

In a specific sense the experience that came to John here in vision may be seen as typical of that of the advent believers in the years 1840–1844. When these believers first heard the message of the imminent second coming, it was to them "sweet as honey." But when Christ did not come as they expected, their experience was indeed bitter. Compare on v. 9.

My belly was bitter. See above on "sweet as honey."

11. He. Christ, the "angel" of vs. 1, 9.

Thou must prophecy again. Compare Eze. 3:1, 4. Though John's eating of the roll had ended in bitterness, Christ's reassuring words to the prophet are that he is now to prophesy again. The word translated "must" is in an emphatic position in the Greek. John, as a representative of the advent believers after the disappointment, is placed under strong obligation to deliver a further message. A great work remains to be done. They must go forth and proclaim the message of the third angel, of Rev. 14:9–12.

Before.. Or, "about. Either meaning suits the context. The messages would be both before many peoples …" and "about many peoples."

Many peoples. As the full meaning of the third angel's message dawned upon the advent believers, more and more they came to realize that it was a message for the world, that it was to be proclaimed "before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." This conviction has resulted in one of the most widespread programs of world evangelization that Christian history has seen, as Seventh-day Adventists have gone forth to proclaim "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (ch. 14:6) the message committed to them.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

11 5T 454; 9T 123

CHAPTER 11

3 *The two witnesses prophesy*. 6 *They have power to shut heaven, that it rain not*. 7 *The beast shall fight against them, and kill them*. 8 *They lie unburied,* 11 *and after three days and a half rise again*. 14 *The second woe is past*. 15 *The seventh trumpet soundeth*.

1. There was given. The line of thought in ch. 10 carries into ch. 11.

A reed. This reed was to be used as a measuring rod. Compare the symbolism of Eze. 40:3, 6; Zech. 2:1, 2.

The angel stood. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words (cf. R.S.V.).

Rise. John is bidden to enter into the action of the vision.

Measure.. On the basis of Zechariah's symbol of the man with a measuring line who measured Jerusalem as an assurance that the city would be rebuilt (see on Zech. 2:2), it may be suggested that the measuring of the temple and worshipers here is also a promise of restoration and preservation. Between the sixth and seventh seals is a parenthetical assurance that in spite of the terrors that attend the second coming of Christ, God has a people who will stand (see Rev. 7; cf. on ch. 6:17). Similarly, the present parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets may also be intended as a reassurance that in the midst of the horrors attendant on the blowing of the trumpets, God's temple—that is, the plan of redemption portrayed there—and His true worshippers are secure.

This restoration and preservation of God's temple would seem also to have a particular application to the fuller understanding of the meaning of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary that has come since 1844.

Temple. Gr. *naos* (see on chs. 3:12; 7:15; cf. ch. 11:19). Following the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, the attention of the Adventist believers was directed to the heavenly sanctuary and to the work of Christ as high priest in that sanctuary. That the reference is not to the literal temple in Jerusalem may be deduced from the fact that when John received his visions, the temple lay in ruins. Because of the rejection of the Jews as God's chosen representatives (see on Matt. 21:43; see Vol. IV, pp. 26–33), that temple will never be restored as a divinely recognized center of worship (see on Eze. 40:1). Consequently "them that worship" are not literal Jews worshipping in their literal temple, but those who direct their worship to the heavenly temple, where Christ ministers in behalf of His children (Heb. 8:1, 2). In a special sense and in the context of this prophecy, the measuring takes place at a specific period in the history of the church.

Them that worship. That is, true spiritual Israel, the people of God, as contrasted with the "Gentiles" (v. 2). The measurement of worshipers suggests a work of judgment (see EGW Supplementary Material on this verse).

2. The court. In the temple of Herod, which John had known well, there was an inner court divided into the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, and the Court of the Priests. Beyond these was a great outer court, the Court of the Gentiles. A barrier—a "middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14)—divided the outer and inner courts, and no Gentile was allowed to pass the barrier on pain of death (see Vol. V, p. 67). In view of the fact that the court mentioned here is "given unto the Gentiles," it would appear that John has this great outer court particularly in mind. The court has been regarded as representing this earth in contrast with "the temple of God" in heaven (v. 1).

Leave out. John is to measure none but the worshipers of God, those who have a right to enter within the barrier where Israelites alone could go. Only such can hope to be preserved from the final judgments that fall on the earth.

Given unto the Gentiles. As was true of the Court of the Gentiles in the earthly Temple. Here "Gentiles" may be understood as those who are not worshippers, who have not confessed themselves as belonging to the Israel of God.

The holy city. That is, Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24; cf. Luke 21:20). The giving over of the outer court to the Gentiles involves the downtreading of the Holy City. For the symbolic significance of Jerusalem see below under "tread under foot."

Tread under foot. The present passage is parallel with the description in Dan. 7:7, 23, which delineates a treading down by the fourth beast (see on Dan. 7:7, 8, 25). Inasmuch as this beast's activities are directed particularly against the "saints of the most High" (Dan. 7:25), it is not illogical to understand that "the holy city" here represents the people of God.

Forty and two months. This period is clearly identical with the "time and times and the dividing of time" of Dan. 7:25 (see comment there).

3. I will give power. The passage reads literally, "I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy," that is, I will cause my two witnesses to prophesy.

My two witnesses. A variety of interpretations of this symbol have been proposed. The allusions of vs. 5, 6 have led some to identify these witnesses as Elijah and Moses (see on vs. 5, 6), but the significance of these "two witnesses" goes beyond this. In v. 4 they are identified as "two olive trees" and "two candlesticks," symbols drawn from Zech. 4:1–6, 11–14. There they are said to represent "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (v. 14). As the olive branches are portrayed furnishing oil

for the lamps of the sanctuary (v. 12), so from these holy ones before the throne of God the Holy Spirit is imparted to men (see on Zech. 4:6, 14; see COL 408; cf. TM 338). Inasmuch as the fullest expression of the Holy Spirit to men is contained in the Scriptures of the OT and the NT, they may be considered to be the two witnesses (see GC 267; cf. on John 5:39). Concerning the Word of God the psalmist declares, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"; "the entrance of thy words giveth light" (Ps. 119:105, 130; cf. Prov. 6:23).

They shall prophesy. In spite of the dominance of evil during the period of 1260 days (see on v. 2), the Spirit of God, especially as manifested in the Scriptures, would nevertheless bear His witness to those men who would receive Him.

A thousand two hundred and threescore days. A period identical with the "forty and two months" of v. 2 (see comment there).

Clothed in sackcloth. Wearing sackcloth was a common sign of mourning (2 Sam. 3:31) and of penitence (Jonah 3:6, 8). Thus the Scriptures might be described as being in mourning at a time when human traditions are in the ascendancy (see on Dan. 7:25).

4. The two olive trees. See on v. 3.

The two candlesticks. Or "the two lampstands" (see on ch. 1:12). See on ch. 11:3.

Standing before … God. See on Zech. 4:14; Rev 11:3.

5. Will hurt. That is, wishes to hurt, or is minded to hurt.

Fire proceedeth. This is reminiscent of Elijah's judgment on the messengers of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:10, 12). Ultimately, those who persist in resisting the witness of the Holy Spirit will be destroyed in the lake of fire (see Rev. 20:15).

Mouth. The singular form is doubtless used collectively for "mouths." Such a usage is common in Greek, as, for example, with "heart" (Matt. 15:8; Mark 6:52), "face" (Matt. 15:8; Mark 6:52), "face" (Matt. 17:6; Acts 7:45).

6. Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority." *Exousia* occurs twice in this verse and in both instances is translated "power."

Shut heaven. As in v. 5, this appears also to be an allusion to Elijah, who predicted that there would be no rain in Israel for "these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1), or, as Luke gives it, "three years and six months" (Luke 4:25; cf. James 5:17).

Waters … to blood. The allusions thus far regarding these witnesses are reminiscing of Elijah (see the foregoing and on v. 5); this one appears to point to Moses and the first plague upon Egypt (Ex. 7:19–21).

All plagues. Not only do the witnesses have the power to call down on their enemies the same plague as that which fell first on Egypt, but they have authority to call down any of the plagues.

7. When they shall have finished. That is, at the end of the 1260 days (see Rev. 11:3; see on Dan. 7:25).

The beast. Gr. *to thērion*, "the wild beast." Thus far John has mentioned no "beast" (*thērion*; the "four beasts" of ch. 4:6 are not really beasts; see comment there). Yet the expression "*the* beast" seems to imply that the reader will understand which beast this is. Two interpretations of this symbol have been set forth.

Commentators who hold that the expression "the beast" implies some previous identification, since such identification is not to be found in the Revelation, find it in the book of Daniel, where the beast par excellence is the fourth beast of Dan. 7. Furthermore,

they point out that that beast came up out of the sea, and the present beast "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit [*abussos*]," which in the OT has a definite association with the sea (see on Rev. 9:1). According to this view the power symbolized by the fourth beast of Daniel, and particularly its latter phase, would be the power that kills the two witnesses.

Other commentators identify this beast as a power that would seek to destroy the Scriptures (symbolized by the two witnesses) at the close of the 1260-day period, in A.D. 1798 (see on Dan. 7:25). Inasmuch as atheism was particularly popular in France at this time, and the anti-religious spirit of the day naturally militated against the use of and belief in Scripture, the First French Republic has been identified as the beast of the present passage. Seventh-day Adventists have generally held the latter view.

The bottomless pit. Gr. *abussos* (see on ch. 9:1; cf. the foregoing on "the beast"). With respect to France, the fact that the beast comes out of the bottomless pit has been understood as indicating that the nation had no foundations—it was an atheistical power. A new form of satanic power manifested itself (see GC 269).

Shall … kill them. That is, attempt to destroy the Word of God. For the manner in which France made war on religion see on v. 9.

8. Bodies. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading "body." However, the singular form would be used collectively as is the term "mouth" in v. 5 (see comment there).

Shall lie. To leave a dead body unburied has ever been considered a revolting indignity (cf. Ps. 79:2, 3). See on Rev. 11:9.

The great city. The fact that this city is said to be the one "where also our Lord was crucified" would seem to identify it as Jerusalem, the "holy city" of v. 2. However, many commentators have understood the expression "where also our Lord was crucified" figuratively, as the names Sodom and Egypt are doubtless to be understood. Hence they identify "the great city" as France, which, toward the close of the 1260-year period, manifested the characteristics symbolized by these expressions. Generally speaking, Seventh-day Adventists hold this latter view.

Spiritually. Gr. *pneumatikōs*, that is, not literally, but by a spiritual figure of speech (cf. Isa. 1:10).

Sodom. Sodom is symbolic of moral degradation (Eze. 16:46–55). Such was the condition of France during the Revolution.

Egypt. This country was known for its denial of the existence of the true God and for its defiance of the commands of God. Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice …? I know not the Lord" (Ex. 5:2). These attitudes were characteristic of the leaders of the Revolution in France.

Crucified. That is, in the person of His followers, many of whom perished in the persecutions in France.

9. People and kindreds. Other nations. These would observe the war on the Bible in France.

Three days and an half. In harmony with the principle of prophetic interpretation, that a day stands for a year, "three days and an half" would be equivalent to three years and a half. Seventh-day Adventists, who generally understand the beast of v. 7 to represent the First French Republic (1792 to 1804), especially in terms of its antireligious bias, find this prophecy fulfilled during that brief period in French revolutionary history

when atheism was at its height. This period may be reckoned from November 10, 1793, when a decree, issued in Paris, abolished religion, to June 17, 1797, when, it is held, the French government removed restrictions against the practice of religion.

As is true of certain other portions of the Apocalypse, this matter of "three days and an half" has been the occasion for considerable difference of viewpoint on the part of commentators. This is true not only because of certain problems in the symbolism itself but also because of the difficulty in fixing upon certain precise dates in the history of the hectic period of the French Revolution. Fortunately, however, the exact location of this time period is not vital to an over-all understanding of the great prophetic time periods of the Bible or to an understanding of the main theme of the prophecy of which it is a part.

10. Dwell upon the earth. See on ch. 3:10.

Make merry. Gr. *euphrainō*, "to rejoice," "to make merry." *Euphrainō* is translated "be merry" in Luke 12:19. Now relieved from the torment, that is, the convicting testimony, of the two witnesses, the wicked quiet their consciences by losing themselves in merriment.

Send gifts. A sign of rejoicing see Esther 9:22).

Tormented. By the convicting power of their prophecy (see v. 3). There are few greater tortures than that of a guilty conscience. When truth and righteousness are constantly presented before the willful sinner, they often become intolerable to him.

11. After three days and an half. That is, at the end of the period during which the witnesses' bodies lie unburied and exposed to public view (see on v. 9).

Spirit of life. That is, a spirit that is life. The Greek phrase here employed is used in the LXX to translate the Heb. *ruach chayyim*, "breath of life" (Gen. 6:17; Gen. 7:15). The Hebrews virtually equated breath with life. Consequently, to say that the breath of life entered into a man was to say that he received life (see Gen. 2:7).

From God. God, the Giver of all life, raises His faithful witnesses.

Stood upon their feet. Compare 2 Kings 13:21; Eze. 37:10.

Great fear fell. A guilty conscience, which had tormented the wicked during the time of the prophecy of the two witnesses (see on v. 10), once more asserts itself. Those who had rejoiced over the death of the witnesses now stand aghast as they behold the miracle of the resurrection of these witnesses.

12. Voice from heaven. The speaker is not identified, but presumably he is God.

Come up hither. Not only are the witnesses resurrected by God; they are bidden to enter heaven. Thus while "their enemies" behold "them" they are completely vindicated from the outrages they had suffered, and the truth of the prophecy they had faithfully proclaimed for 1260 days is demonstrated to all. The voice of God Himself has welcomed them to heaven, before the very eyes of those who had sought to destroy them.

This exaltation of the witnesses has been understood as symbolizing the remarkable popularity that the Scriptures have enjoyed since the early 19th century. Soon after the French Revolution various national Bible societies were established. Particularly notable among these were the British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804, and the American Bible Society, organized in 1816. These societies, with others, have circulated Scripture portions in more than 1,500 languages. Thus in the last century and a half, the Bible, rather than being relegated to oblivion as a spiritual guide, has come to enjoy its widest circulation.

Ascended … in a cloud. As Jesus bade His disciples farewell, a cloud "received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). So also the two witnesses are carried to heaven in a cloud. The figure fittingly describes the exaltation of the Scriptures in the period following their suppression in France (see on Rev. 11:9; cf. Dan. 4:22).

Enemies beheld them. See the foregoing on "come up hither."

13. Same hour. That is, almost immediately after the ascension of the witnesses.

A great earthquake. The symbol of an earthquake is used repeatedly in Scripture to portray the turmoil and upheaval that characterize the world immediately preceding the second advent (see Mark 13:8; Rev. 16:18). Applying the prophecy to France, commentators see in the earthquake a picture of the upheaval that shook the nation toward the close of the 18th century.

Tenth part. This is not the final earthquake, for only a fraction of the city (see on vs. 2, 8) falls at this time (cf. ch. 16:18). This earthquake signifies a temporary judgment that frightens into submission some of those who have gloried in the death of the witnesses. Some apply the expression "tenth part of the city" to the entire nation of France on the basis that France was one of the "ten kings" to arise from the fallen Roman Empire (Dan. 7:24). Others identify the city as papal Rome and France as one of its ten divisions.

Of men. Gr. *onomata anthrōpōn*, literally, "names of men." Some take the word *onomata*, "names," here in the sense of "persons" (see on Acts 3:16). Others apply *onomata* to titles, offices, or orders that were suppressed during the French Revolution.

Seven thousand. Comparatively a small number of persons are meant, but enough to bring survivors to recognize the sovereignty of God, whose witnesses they had despised.

The God of heaven. This title occurs frequently in Daniel (see Dan. 2:18, 19, 37, 44, cf. Ezra 5:11, 12; 6:9; 7:12).

14. The second woe. That is, the judgments under the sixth trumpet, which ended in 1840 (see ch. 8:13; cf. ch. 9:12; see Additional Note on Chapter 9).

The third woe. That is, the events portrayed under the seventh trumpet (vs. 15–19).

15. The seventh angel. This marks the beginning of the third woe (see on v. 14) and the end of the parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets (chs. 10:1 to 11:14; see on ch. 11:1). Seventh-day Adventists date its beginning as 1844 (see on v. 19).

Great voices. These were probably those of the heavenly hosts (cf. ch. 5:11, 12). Similarly, in the seventh plague, a great voice is heard from the temple in heaven (ch. 16:17).

Kingdoms. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "kingdom." Christ receives the kingdom a short time prior to His return to this earth (see on Dan. 7:14). At the time of His coming all earthly opposition is crushed (see on Rev. 17:14).

His Christ. That is, His Anointed (see Ps. 2:2). The hosts of heaven, who themselves have not received salvation through Christ, refer to Him as "his [God's] Christ," probably because the title "Christ" particularly refers to the second person of the Godhead in His function as the One anointed for the work of redemption.

He shall reign for ever. See Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27; Luke 1:33.

16. The four and twenty elders. See on ch. 4.

Fell upon their faces. Compare ch. 4:10.

17. Lord God Almighty. See on ch. 1:8. A particularly fitting title for God as victor.

Which art. See on ch. 1:4.

And wast. See on ch. 1:4.

And art to come. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. They probably are omitted from the complete formula of ch. 1:4 because here the focus of the elder's praise is on the past and present position of God rather than on the future.

Hast taken … hast reigned. The tenses of the Greek may be rendered better, "hast taken … didst reign," that is, hast taken and didst begin to reign. The triumphant reign begins with God's asserting His omnipotence. God has ever been all powerful, and the reign of sin has been only by His sufferance, that the true nature of evil might be revealed to created beings. When that purpose has been accomplished, then He takes His "great power" and once more reigns supreme. See 1 Cor. 15:24–28.

18. Nations were angry. Compare Ps. 2:1. Such will be the condition of the nations prior to the coming of Christ. They will band together to oppose the work and people of Christ (see on Rev. 13:12; 14:8).

Wrath. The wrath of God is summed up in the seven last plagues (ch. 15:1). The work of opposition against Christ is brought to a halt by these plagues.

Time. Gr. *kairos*, a particular time with a definite purpose (see on ch. 1:3). This is a time of judgment, both of reward and of destruction.

That they should be judged. The mention of both reward and destruction indicates that John is speaking of the final judgment, which takes place after the millennium (ch. 20:12–15).

Reward unto thy servants. See Matt. 5:12; 6:1; 1 Cor. 3:8; Rev. 22:12. Since the events enumerated are sequential (see EW 36), the reward here spoken of is the inheritance of the new earth at the close of the millennium.

Prophets. God's special servants, who speak forth for Him. This class has borne heavy responsibilities and has often suffered most severely for their Lord.

Saints. Or, "holy ones." The members of the body of Christ characterized by the purity of their lives.

Them that fear. Gr. *hoi phoboumenoi*, a term used in the Acts for those who, though not fully proselytes to Israel, nevertheless worshiped the true God (see on Acts 10:2). If the same general meaning is intended here, this third class to receive a reward in the judgment may be understood as those who have not completely known Christ and His way, but who have lived in the fullness of the light that has come to them. Because they have feared the name of God, as He has been revealed to them, they too receive a reward (see DA 638). On the other hand, the phrase *hoi phoboumenoi* may simply be in apposition with the word translated "saints." The passage would then read, "the saints, even those fearing thy name."

Small and great. Worldly status is meaningless in the final judgment.

Destroy them which destroy. The fate of the wicked, who have destroyed the earth—physically, and also spiritually—is strikingly fitting. They themselves are destroyed.

19. The temple. There is opened before John a view of God's heavenly temple, with "the ark of his testament" the focal point of the vision. Now, in the typical sanctuary, which was a "copy of the true one" (Heb. 9:24, RSV) in heaven, the ark was in the most holy place, which was the center of the service of the Day of Atonement—a typical day of judgment. It is in connection with the beginning of the seventh trumpet that John sees the temple in heaven and very particularly "the ark of his testament." This indicates that

the second and last division of Christ's heavenly ministry, answering to the typical Day of Atonement, has opened. Other scriptures reveal that this final phase of Christ's work began in 1844 (see on Dan. 8:14). Accordingly, Seventh-day Adventists place the beginning of the seventh trumpet in that year.

Ark of his testament. The ark in the typical sanctuary was the depository of the Ten Commandments, God's immutable moral law for all men in all ages. No believer in God in Jewish times could think of the ark without becoming immediately conscious of the Ten Commandments. John's vision of the ark above argues eloquently that in earth's last hours God's great moral law is to be central in the thinking and in the lives of all who seek to serve God in spirit and in truth (see on chs. 12:17; 14:12; cf. GC 433).

Lightnings, and voices, and thunderings. As under the seventh plague (ch. 16:18).

An earthquake. As under the seventh plague (ch. 16:18, 19, cf. on ch. 11:13).

Great hail. As under the seventh plague (ch. 16:21).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 TM 17; 7T 219
2–11 GC 266
3, 4 GC 267, 269
5, 7 GC 268
7 GC 273, 287
8 GC 269
10 GC 274
11, 12 GC 287
15 GC 301
18 EW 36; 6T 14
19 CW 30; EW 32, 42, 252; GC 415, 433; PP 356; SR 377, 379; IT 76; 2T 693; 6T 368

CHAPTER 12

1 *A woman clothed with the sun travaileth*. 4 *The great red dragon standeth before her, ready to devour her child:* 6 *when she was delivered she fleeth into the wilderness*. 7 *Michael and his angels fight with the dragon, and prevail*. 13 *The dragon being cast down into the earth, persecuteth the woman*.

1. There appeared. Chapter 12 begins a new line of prophecy, which continues to the end of the book. This section of prophecy sets forth the church of God in conflict with the powers of evil, and the church's ultimate triumph over them.

Wonder. Gr. *sēmeion*, "a sign," "a mark," "a token," from *sēmaino*, "to give a sign," "to signify," "to indicate" (see on ch. 1:1). The word is frequently translated "miracle" (Luke 23:8; John 4:54) where a miracle is described from the point of view of a sign of authority (see Vol. V, p. 209). In Rev. 12:1 *sēmeion* means a sign portending forthcoming events.

Heaven. Here doubtless meaning the sky, not the heaven where God dwells. For the nature of symbolic visions see on Eze. 1:10.

Woman. In OT figure the true church is at times represented by a woman (Isa. 54:5, 6; Jer. 6:2). When the church apostatized it was compared with a corrupt woman (Jer. 3:20; Eze. 23:2–4). The same figures appear in the NT (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–32; Rev. 17:1–3).

In Rev. 12 the woman represents the true church. Since she is presented as about to give birth to Christ (see vs. 2, 4, 5) and later as being persecuted, following the ascension of Christ (vs. 5, 13–17), she represents the church of both the OT and the NT. Compare Acts 7:38.

Clothed with the sun. This may be thought of as representing the glory of God, especially as revealed in the gospel. By contrast the woman representing the false church is portrayed as arrayed in gaudy garments and as carrying a cup filled with abominations (ch. 17:4).

Moon. This symbol is understood by many commentators as representing the system of types and shadows of OT times, which were eclipsed by the greater revelation that came through Christ. The ceremonial law, being fulfilled in the life and death of Christ, could well be represented by the moon, which shines with light borrowed from the sun.

Crown. Gr. *stephanos*, a victor's crown (see on Matt. 27:29; Rev. 2:10), not *diadēma*, a kingly crown (see on ch. 12:3).

Twelve stars. In general commentators have applied this symbol to either the 12 patriarchs or the 12 apostles or to both. Since the principal emphasis in ch. 12 is on the NT church, the emphasis is doubtless on the 12 apostles. At the same time, the picture of 12 tribes is also carried over into the NT church (see on Rev. 7:4).

2. With child. The church is presented at the time the Messiah is about to be born. Some see a reference to Isa. 7:14. For the figure of a travailing woman see Isa. 26:17; 66:7, 8.

3. Wonder. Gr. *sēmeion* (see on v. 1).

Red dragon. In v. 9 the power thus represented is identified as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." Here the symbol represents Satan as working through pagan Rome, the power ruling the world when Jesus was born (see on v. 4; cf. GC 438). The dragon is described as "red," probably because of the fact that in all his connection with the church of God he has appeared in the role of persecutor and destroyer. It has been his studied purpose to destroy the children of the Most High.

Seven Heads. Seven heads appear also on the beast John saw rising from the sea (Rev. 13:1), and on the scarlet-colored beast (ch. 17:3). The heads in ch. 17:9, 10 are identified as "seven mountains" and "seven kings." It seems reasonable to conclude that the seven heads of the dragon represents political powers that have championed the cause of the dragon, and through which the dragon has exercised his persecuting power. Some hold that the number "seven" is here used as a round number denoting completeness, and that it is not necessary to find precisely seven nations through whom Satan has operated. Compare on ch. 17:9, 10.

For a description of the seven-headed serpent in ancient mythology see on Isa. 27:1. The Talmud also mentions a dragon with seven heads (*Ḳiddushin* 29b, Soncino ed., p. 141).

Ten horns. The beast of ch. 13 and that of ch. 17 also had ten horns each. Some hold the ten horns of the dragon to be identical with those of these two beasts, and the latter to be identical with the ten horns of the fourth beast of Dan. 7. For an identification of the ten horns of Daniel's fourth beast see on Dan. 7:7. Others see in the ten horns of the dragon a more general designation for the minor political powers through which Satan has operated, in contrast with the seven heads, which may be regarded as representing the

major political powers (see above on "seven heads"). They suggest that the number "ten" may be a round number, as so often elsewhere in Scripture (see on Luke 15:8). Compare on Rev. 17:9, 10.

Crowns. Gr. *diadēmata*, singular *diadēma*, literally, "something bound around," from *diadeō*, "to bind around." The word was used to describe the badge of kingship worn by Persian kings, a blue ribbon trimmed with white, worn on the turban. Hence the word came to be used as a badge of royalty. *Diadēmata* occurs only here and in chs. 13:1 and 19:12. *Diadēma* is contrasted with *stephanos*, also translated "crown" in the NT (Matt. 27:29; 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; etc.). *Stephanos* is a wreath, often signifying the garland, or chaplet, given as a prize for victory (see on 1 Cor. 9:25).

Upon his heads. The fact that the heads are wearing badges of royalty may be taken as further evidence that they represent political kingdoms (see above on "seven heads").

4. His tail drew. Literally, "his tail is drawing." In prophetic vision John saw the action in progress.

The third part. Some believe that the event here symbolized is further described in vs. 7–9, and that "the third part of the stars of heaven" represents a third part of the heavenly angels, who joined Lucifer in his rebellion and were expelled from heaven (see 3T 115; 5T 291). Others interpret the "stars" as Jewish rulers, of which there were three classes—kings, priests, and the Sanhedrin. A third part being cast to the ground they interpret as Rome's taking away of the kingship from Judah.

To devour. This represents the efforts of Satan to destroy the infant Jesus. One needs only to recall the attitude of Herod as he listened to the message from the wise men (Matt. 2:16, to perceive the appropriateness of this figurative description of the event. In later years pagan Rome stood up against the "Prince of princes" □see on Dan. 8:25).

5. A man child. Literally, "a son, a male."

Rule all nations. An allusion to Ps. 2:8, 9, and clearly applicable to the Messiah. This application the Jews themselves recognized (Talmud *Sukkah* 52a, Soncino ed., p. 247). In Rev. 19:13–16 the being here described is identified as the "Word of God" and as "King of kings." See on chs. 2:27; 19:15.

Caught up. A reference to the ascension of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). For the purpose of this prophecy the symbolism passes over completely the story of the life, work, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It mentions only the ascension.

6. Wilderness. Gr. *erēmos*, "a forsaken, desert, empty place," "an uninhabited place." Here *erēmos* doubtless represents a place of seclusion or obscurity, an area or condition in which the church would be in a place of obscurity, away from the public gaze. See on ch. 17:3.

A place. This place is referred to in v. 14 as "her place." The idea is that the protection and sanctuary in obscurity here found by the woman were divinely appointed and prepared.

They. The subject is indefinite and doubtless refers to the various agencies God employed to preserve, strengthen, and build up the church during the time when she was severely persecuted.

Feed. Gr. *trephō*, "to make to grow," "to bring up," "to rear," "to nourish." *Trephō* is rendered "nourished" in v. 14. God cares for His own. Even though the church is persecuted and driven into exile the Lord nourishes it.

Days. This period of 1260 days is referred to seven times in the books of Daniel and Revelation. As 1260 days it appears in Rev. 11:3; 12:6; as 42 months in Rev. 11:2; 13:5; and as 3 1/2 times in Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14. For the calculation of this period see on Dan. 7:25. Adventists generally date this period as from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. During this period God's hand was over the church, preserving it from extinction.

7. And there was. Literally, "and there became."

War in heaven. John now presents briefly the history of the great controversy between Satan and Christ in heaven, from its origin to the time of Christ's victory at the cross (Rev. 12:7–9; cf. Col. 2:14, 15), the final casting out of Satan at that time to this earth (Rev. 12:10–12), and the course of the controversy on earth down to the time of the end (Rev. 12:13–16; see on Dan. 11:35). This brief survey stands as a background for the extended delineation of developments in the conflict during the time of the end, by means of which it is finally and successfully terminated (Rev. 12:17 to 20:15).

In ch. 12:9–11 John speaks most particularly of the phase of the conflict waged in heaven in connection with Christ's death on the cross. For contextual evidence that points to this conclusion see on v. 9.

Though the revelator is focusing primarily on the turning point of the controversy reached at the time of the cross, it is proper to understand the words, "there was war in heaven," as referring also to the time prior to the creation of the earth, when the hostility of the dragon began, and Lucifer aspired to be like God (see on Isa. 14:13, 14; Eze. 28:12–16). At that time he and the angels who symphatized with him were expelled from heaven (see 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The loyal angels did not then understand fully all the issues involved. But when Satan basely shed the blood of Christ, he stood exposed completely and forever before the heavenly world. Henceforth his activities were further restricted (see DA 761).

Michael. Gr. *Michaēl*, a transliteration of the Heb. *mika'el*, meaning "who [is] like God?" Michael is referred to as "one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13), as "the great prince" (Dan. 12:1), and also as "the archangel" (Jude 9). Jewish literature described Michael as the highest of the angels, the true representative of God, and identified him with the angel of Jehovah (see Talmud *Yoma* 37a, Soncino ed., p. 172; Midrash Rabbah, on Gen. 18:3; Ex. 3:2, Soncino ed., pp. 411, 53). According to Midrash Rabbah, on Ex. 12:29, Michael was the angel who vindicated Israel against Satan's accusations (Soncino ed., p. 222). A careful examination of the Scripture references to Michael points to the conclusion that he is none other than our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (see on Dan. 10:13; cf. on Jude 9).

His angels. That is, the loyal angels, the "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

Dragon. See on v. 3.

His angels. That is, the angels who sided with Satan in his warfare against Christ (see on v. 4).

8. Prevailed not. Inasmuch as the phrase "war in heaven" (v. 7) may have a dual application, describing both the original controversy in heaven between Lucifer and God

and the controversy on earth between Satan and the incarnate Christ, the phrase "prevailed not" would appropriately apply to both stages of the conflict. In neither was Satan successful.

Their place. This phrase may be understood either as the place once possessed, or occupied, by them, or the place once assigned them. Lucifer was at one time the covering cherub (see on Eze. 28:14), and the angels who joined him in rebellion held various positions of responsibility. These, Lucifer and his angels lost when they were cast out of heaven.

9. The great dragon. See on v. 3.

Was cast out. Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven in ages past (2 Peter 2:4), prior to the creation of this world (PP 36–42; cf. EW 145, 146; GC 498–500; 3SG 36–39; 1SP 17–33). Nevertheless, it seems that until the cross he had access to heavenly beings, and to a limited extent, possibly as "prince of this world" (John 12:31; Luke 4:6), but not as an inhabitant of heaven, to the precincts of heaven (DA 761; cf. SR 26, 27; see below on "into the earth"). However this may be, a decisive casting out occurred at the cross, as our Lord Himself declared (John 12:31, 32; cf. PP 68–70; DA 490, 679, 758). That John here (Rev. 12:9) refers most particularly to events connected with Christ's triumph on the cross is evident from the context (vs. 10–13). The following points may be noted:

1. The proclamation in vs. 10–12 by a "loud voice … in heaven" is more or less parenthetical, its purpose being to explain the significance of the casting down of Satan in v. 9, first with respect to the inhabitants of heaven and then to those of this earth. Following this explanatory parenthesis, v. 13 takes up the narrative of Satan's activities at the point where it was left in v. 9. Accordingly, vs. 10–12 constitute, primarily, a statement concerning the status of the plan of salvation at the point of time when Satan was "cast out into the earth."
2. The first declaration by the "loud voice" consists of a series of facts relative to Christ's triumph over Satan on the cross—the plan of "salvation" was made sure, "strength" was provided for resisting the wiles of Satan, Christ's "kingdom" was made sure, and His "power," literally, "authority," to be man's Saviour, high priest, and king was confirmed (Matt. 28:18; GC 503).
3. The reason assigned in Rev. 12:10 for this fourfold achievement is specifically said to be that "the accuser of our brethren is cast down." This clearly links these accomplishments with the casting down of v. 9.
4. At the time of the casting down of vs. 9, 10, 13 "the accuser of our brethren" had already been actively accusing "them before our God day and night." Obviously, the fall here referred to came after a period during which Satan had been accusing "the brethren," and it would therefore appear that this cannot be the original casting out of Satan prior to the creation of our earth.
5. Verse 11 specifically states that it was "the blood of the Lamb"—the death of Christ upon the cross—that had made victory over the "accuser of our brethren" possible.

Old. Gr. *archaios*, "ancient," "old," from *archē*, "beginning." Our English word "archaic" comes from *archaios*. Compare John 8:44.

Serpent. A reference to the serpent who deceived Eve (Gen. 3:1).

Devil. Gr. *diabolos*, "a slanderer" (see on Matt. 4:1).

Satan. Gr. *Satanas*, a transliteration of the Heb. *śaṭan*, meaning "adversary" (see on Zech. 3:1).

Deceiveth. Gr. *planaō*, "to cause to wander," "to lead astray," "to deceive" (see on Matt. 18:12).

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, literally, the "inhabited [world]," from *oikeō*, "to dwell" (see on Matt. 4:8).

Into the earth. The controversy in heaven began over plans for the creation of man (see 3SG 36). When the earth was created and Adam was appointed its vicegerent, Satan directed his efforts at overthrowing the newly created man. When he succeeded in bringing about the downfall of Adam and Eve he claimed the earth as his domain (see on Matt. 4:8, 9). However, he did not confine his efforts to this earth but tempted also the inhabitants of other worlds (see EW 290). Not until the second coming of Christ will Satan be completely confined to this earth (see on Rev. 20:3; cf. EW 290; DA 490).

10. A loud voice. There is great rejoicing in the courts of heaven over the casting down of Satan and his host.

Now is come. The focus of time is the cross (see on vs. 7, 9). Well might the inhabitants of heaven rejoice, for Satan's destruction was now assured. It was certain in the plan of God before, but now heavenly intelligences joined in the song, for they had seen Satan's malignity against Christ revealed at Calvary.

Salvation. Gr. *sōtēria*, "deliverance," "preservation," "salvation," here, perhaps, "victory." The Greek has the article, hence we should read "the victory."

Strength. Gr. *dunamis*, "power," "might," "strength." The reference here is doubtless to the display of power in the overthrow of the dragon.

Kingdom. Satan had contended that he was the rightful ruler of this world. His failure to lead Jesus into sin assured the kingdom for Christ.

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority."

His Christ. Or, "His Anointed." Christ means "anointed" (see on Matt. 1:1).

The accuser. Satan was the accuser of the brethren in OT days (see Job 1:8–12; Zech. 3:1). This role he has continued since the cross, but in a restricted sense (see on John 12:31; cf. DA 761). Rabbinical writings frequently represent Satan as the great accuser (see Talmud *Sanhedrin* 89b, Soncino ed., p. 595; Midrash Rabbah, on Ex. 32:2, Soncino ed., p. 494).

Brethren. Compare ch. 6:11.

Day and night. That is, whenever the opportunity presented itself.

11. They overcame. The mind of the prophet is absorbed in contemplation of those who have been accused by the instigator of evil. He thinks of how they have suffered, and the indignities to which they have been exposed. He remembers how amid hardships they overcame, not in their own strength, but "by the blood of the Lamb."

By the blood. Literally, "because of the blood," or "on the basis of the blood." The saints overcame because of the victory of Calvary. For the significance of the "blood" see on Rev. 1:5; cf. on Rom. 5:9.

Lamb. See on John 1:29.

By the word. Literally, "on account of the word," or "on the basis of the word."

Their testimony. That is, their personal witness concerning Jesus and the gospel.

Loved not their lives. What fidelity! Men would die rather than disobey God. See on John 12:25.

12. Rejoice, ye heavens. There was rejoicing in heaven, for the angels and the inhabitants of other worlds knew Satan was doomed by Christ's victory at Calvary.

Woe. For the church there was further persecution, hence its members could not yet rejoice.

Great wrath. He is angry because of his defeat. Rather than experience remorse and sorrow for evil, he plunges more and more deeply into iniquity. He goes forward with intensified and renewed malignity in his efforts to persecute the church of the living God. Compare 1 Peter 5:8.

Short. Gr. *oligos*, "few," "small," "little," when used of number, quantity, or size; "short," when used of time. *Oligos* is a relative term and describes that with which it is associated in terms of the context. Thus *oligos* describes the "few little fishes" in the narrative of the feeding of the 4,000 in comparison with the number that would be required to feed that multitude (Matt. 15:34). The number that find the way of life are "few" (*oligos*) compared with the number that choose the way of destruction (Matt. 7:14). Jesus laid His hands on a "few" (*oligos*) sick folks compared with the number who might have been healed had there not been such unbelief (Mark 6:5).

Oligos is used with reference to time in eight instances in the NT. In five of these instances the time element is implied in the word itself (Mark 6:31; James 4:14; 1 Peter 1:6; 5:10; Rev. 17:10) and the word is translated respectively "a while," "little time," "season," "a while," "short space." In three instances the time element is expressed by a word modified by *oligos* (Acts 14:28, which reads literally, "not a little time"; Heb. 12:10; Rev. 12:12). The length of time expressed by *oligos* is dependent upon that with which it is compared. For example, the rest described in Mark 6:31 as lasting *oligos* probably continued only a few days, or at the most a few weeks. On the other hand, in James 4:14 *oligos* describes the life span of a man. In Rev. 12:12 *oligos* defines the period of time from the casting out of Satan at the time of the crucifixion of Christ to the end of Satan's tyranny over the inhabitants of earth. This period of time is described as *oligos* in comparison with the more than 4,000 years preceding the crucifixion.

It may appear that the 2,000 years since the crucifixion, during which Satan has been actively at work against the church, is hardly a "short time" either absolutely or when compared with all the time from Adam to the cross. However, this expression should be understood against the background of the whole tenor of the book of Revelation, which presents the second coming of Christ as near (see on ch. 1:1; cf. ch. 22:20). If Jesus is coming "quickly," then the time for Satan to work is "short." See on ch. 17:10.

13. Woman. See on v. 1. Being now unable to attack the Son of God directly, the dragon attempts to hurt the Son through the mother, by persecuting the mother of the man-child, the church (see on v. 6).

Man child. See on v. 5.

14. Two wings. The figure of eagle wings was familiar to God's ancient people. The deliverance from Pharaoh and his hosts is referred to by this figure (Ex. 19:4; Deut.

32:11). Some see in these wings a symbol of the haste with which the church was obliged to find safety.

Nourished. See on v. 6.

A time, and times. See on v. 6.

15. Water as a flood. In Ps. 74:13 and Eze. 29:3 a dragon is identified as a water animal, hence, probably the figure of water as a symbol of destruction. Satan sought to destroy the Christian church by the inundation of false doctrines as well as by persecution (cf. on Rev. 17:15).

16. Earth helped the woman. Some hold that "earth" here represents areas where there was a scarcity of peoples, in contrast with "waters," which sometimes represent "peoples," "nations," and "tongues" (ch. 17:15). They point out that at the time of the Reformation there were multitudes of people in Europe and the Far East, but that the North American continent was very sparsely populated. Thus they point to this land as the "earth" which here brings relief to the persecuted church of the Old World. The Protestant lands of Western Europe, which became a haven from persecution, may also be included. Others point to the Protestant Reformation itself as the major factor in breaking the spell of the apostate church.

Swallowed up. That is, made ineffectual the devices of destruction.

17. Was wroth. Or, "was enraged." Failure to destroy the church in the wilderness intensifies the wrath of the dragon, so much so that he sets about with great determination to wage war upon the people of God, particularly the "remnant of her seed."

To make war. In an endeavor to destroy the Christian church. His supreme effort in this direction is still in the future (see on chs. 13:11–17; 16:12–16; cf. GC 592).

Remnant. Gr. *loipoi*, "remaining ones," from *leipō*, "to leave," "to leave behind." See Additional Note at end of chapter.

Keep the commandments. That the remnant is thus identified indicates that the commandments of God will be especially controverted in this struggle between the dragon and church (see on ch. 14:12; see GC 445–450).

Testimony of Jesus Christ. Or, "witness of Jesus Christ." In the Greek this phrase may be understood either as the "testimony" (or "witness") Christians bear concerning Jesus or as the "testimony" (or "witness") that originates with Jesus and is revealed to His church through the prophets (see on ch. 1:2). A comparison with ch. 19:10 clearly favors the latter interpretation. There the "testimony of Jesus" is defined as the "spirit of prophecy," meaning that Jesus is witnessing to the church through the medium of prophecy.

The close relationship between the "testimony of Jesus" and prophecy is further demonstrated by a comparison between chs. 19:10 and 22:9. In ch. 19:10 the angel identifies himself as "thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus," and in ch. 22:9 as "thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets." Thus, on the reasonable conclusion that these two expressions of the angel are parallel, those who have the testimony of Jesus are identified with the prophets. Since it is the distinctive work of the prophets to bear messages from Jesus to the people (see on ch. 1:1), the interpretation that the testimony of Jesus refers to the "testimony," or "witness," that Jesus bears to the church is strongly supported. Seventh-day Adventists thus interpret the passage and believe that the "remnant" will be distinguished by the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in their midst. The "testimony of Jesus Christ," they believe, is the

witness of Jesus in their midst through the medium of the prophetic gift. See Additional Note on Chapter 19.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 12

Inasmuch as the language and imagery of the Revelation are drawn largely from the OT (see p. 725; cf. on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; Isa. 50:1; Eze. 26:13; see Additional Note on Rev. 18), a correct understanding of the word "remnant" as used in Rev. 12:17 calls for consideration of its Hebrew equivalents in the setting of OT usage. The three Hebrew words most commonly used for "remnant" are: (1) *peleṭah* (or *paleṭ*, *paliṭ*), "what escapes," "those who escape," from *palaṭ*, "to escape," "to deliver"; (2) *she'erith* (or *she'ar*), "the rest," "what remains," "remainder," "remnant," and its verb form *sha'ar*, "to leave over," "to be left over," "to remain"; (3) *yether*, "what remains," "remainder," "remnant," from *yathar*, "to leave over," "to be left over." Instances of the use of these words with respect to God's chosen people may be classified as follows:

1. Members of Jacob's family preserved under Joseph's care in Egypt are spoken of as "as posterity," literally, "a remnant" (*she'erith*; Gen. 45:7). Here, emphasis is upon the fact of preservation. So far as is known the entire family was preserved.
2. In the midst of general apostasy Elijah protested, "I, even I only, remain [*yathar*] a prophet of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:22), "I, even I only, am left," but God declared, "I have left [*sha'ar*] me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:14, 18; cf. Rom. 11:4, 5).
3. A small "remnant" (*peleṭah*) of the ten tribes "escaped [*sha'ar*] out of the hand of the kings of Assyria," who had led the vast majority of the nation into captivity, and remained in Palestine (2 Chron. 30:6). By 722 B.C. Judah alone was "left" (*sha'ar*) to function as a nation (2 Kings 17:18). Accordingly, it became the "remnant" (*she'ar*) of the twelve tribes and sole heir to the covenant promises, privileges, and responsibilities that originally belonged to all twelve (Isa. 10:22; see Vol. IV, pp. 26–32).
4. A few years later Sennacherib conquered all of Judah except Jerusalem, which, in turn, is spoken of as a "remnant." This "remnant [*peleṭah*] that is escaped [*sha'ar*] of the house of Judah" was to "take root downward," to "bear fruit upward," and to "go forth" as *the* "remnant" (*she'erith*) of God's chosen people, His appointed instrument for the salvation of the world (2 Kings 19:4, 30, 31; Isa. 37:4, 31, 32; cf. Isa. 4:2; 10:20). God also purposed to "recover" a "remnant" (*she'ar*) of the Israelites and Judahites that had gone captive into Assyria, and to prepare a "highway" for this "remnant [*she'ar*] of his people," as He formerly had when their ancestors left the land of Egypt (Isa. 11:11, 12, 16).
5. When the "king of Babylon" invaded Palestine a century later, he too "left [*yether*; *sha'ar* in 2 Kings 25:22; cf. ch. 24:14] a remnant [*peleṭah*; *she'ar* in 2 Kings 25:22]" (Eze. 14:22; cf. Jer. 40:11; Jer. 42:2), which was to "escape" (*palaṭ*), that is, survive, the sword, pestilence, and famine that accompanied the siege of Jerusalem (Eze. 7:16). But

Jeremiah warned that even some of this "remnant" (*yether*; ch. 39:9), or "residue [*sha'ar*] of Jerusalem," that God desired should "remain [*sha'ar*] in this land," would later be "removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" (ch. 24:8, 9). Most of this "remnant" fled to Egypt, but Jeremiah warned that "none of the remnant [*she'erith*] of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there," should "escape [*paliṭ*] or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah" (ch. 44:14).

6. The Lord promised to "leave a remnant" (*yathar*) of those taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, which would "escape the sword" and "remember" God in the lands of their captivity (Eze. 6:8, 9). A "remnant" (*she'erith*) of those in captivity (Jer. 23:3; cf. ch. 31:7) would eventually "escape [*palat*] out of the land of Babylon" (ch. 50:28). Nehemiah speaks of the returned captives as "the Jews that had escaped [*peleṭah*]," "the remnant [*peleṭah*] that are left [*sha'ar*] of the captivity" (ch. 1:2, 3). To this "remnant" (*she'erith*) God entrusted all the covenant responsibilities and promises (Zech. 8:12; cf. Vol. IV, pp. 30–32), but warned that if they should again break God's commandments He would consume them, "so that there should be no remnant [*she'erith*] nor escaping [*peleṭah*]" (Ezra. 9:14).
7. Many references to the "remnant" occur in a context that clearly anticipates the Messianic kingdom (see Isa. 4:2, 3; 11:11, 16; cf. ch. 11:1–9; Jer. 23:3; cf. ch. 23:4–6; Micah 4:7; cf. ch. 4:1–8; 5:7, 8; cf. ch. 5:2–15; Zeph. 3:13).

A composite description of the "remnant" in these and other OT passages identifies the group thus designated as composed of Israelites who survived calamities such as war, captivity, pestilence, and famine, and who were spared in mercy to continue as God's chosen people (Gen. 45:7; Ezra. 9:13; Eze. 7:16). Repeatedly, this "remnant" was "left [*she'ar*] but a few of [from] many" (Jer. 42:2; cf. Isa. 10:22). Remembering the true God and turning to Him (2 Chron. 30:6; Isa. 10:20; Eze. 6:8, 9), they renounced the authority of false religious systems (1 Kings 19:18) and refused to do iniquity (Zeph. 3:13). Loyal to God's commandments (Ezra. 9:14), they were "called holy" and were "written among the living in Jerusalem" (Isa. 4:3). Accepting anew the responsibilities and privileges of God's everlasting covenant, they "take root downward, … bear fruit upward," and "go forth" to declare His glory among the Gentiles (2 Kings 19:30, 31; Isa. 37:31, 32; 66:19).

The "remnant" of OT times is thus composed of successive generations of Israelites—God's chosen people. Again and again the majority apostatized, but each time there was a faithful "remnant" that became exclusive heirs to the sacred promises, privileges, and responsibilities of the covenant originally made with Abraham and confirmed at Sinai. This "remnant" was the formally appointed group to which God purposed to send the Messiah and through which He proposed to evangelize the heathen; it did not consist of scattered individuals as such, however faithful they might be, but was a corporate entity, God's visible, divinely commissioned organization on earth. It should also be noted that the various Hebrew terms translated "remnant" do not connote the *last* of any thing or group of people, except in the sense that, in each instance, those who "remain" are temporarily, in their generation, the last existing link in the chosen line.

Ever since the days of Abraham there has been "a remnant" according to God's "grace" (cf. Rom. 11:5).

God warned those who returned from Babylonian captivity that there would be "no remnant nor escaping" should they *again* prove disloyal to Him (Ezra. 9:14; cf. Deut. 19:20). Accordingly, when the Jews rejected the Messiah and renounced their allegiance to the covenant (DA 737, 738), the "kingdom of God" was to be taken from them as a people and "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43; cf. 1 Peter 2:9, 10). This meant the permanent, irrevocable cancellation of their special standing before God *as a nation* and the transfer of the promises, privileges, and responsibilities of the covenant relationship to the Christian church (see Vol. IV, pp. 32–36).

In Rom. 9:27 Paul declares that "though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, [only] a remnant [*kataleimma*] shall be saved" (see on Rom. 9:27). He is here applying the term "remnant" of Isa. 10:22 to Jews of his day who, as individuals, had accepted Christ as the Messiah. But it was as members of the Christian church, and no longer as Jews, that they had a right to this title. In Rom. 11:5 he speaks of these Christian Jews as "a remnant [*leimma*] according to … grace." In chs. 9 to 11 Paul presents the Christian church as heir to the promises, privileges, and responsibilities of the everlasting covenant. Thus it is the divinely commissioned successor to Judaism as trustee of the revealed will of God, as the corporate representative of His purposes on earth, and as His chosen instrument for the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of men (see Vol. IV, pp. 35, 36).

Aside from Rom. 9:27; 11:5; Rev. 12:17, the term "remnant" in the NT (Matt. 22:6; Rev. 11:13; 19:21) is not significant with respect to God's people. In Rev. 3:2, however, the expression "which remain" is from *loipos*, the same word translated "remnant" in ch. 12:17.

A few centuries after Christ the church experienced the great papal apostasy. For some 1260 years papal power more or less effectively suppressed and scattered God's true representatives on earth (see Additional Note on Dan. 7; see on Dan. 7:25; cf. Rev. 12:6). Through the Reformation of the 16th century (see on ch. 12:15, 16) God purposed once more to lead forth a "remnant," this time from mystical Babylon. Various Protestant groups served as Heaven's appointed harbingers of truth, point by point restoring the glorious gospel of salvation. But group after group became satisfied with its partial concept of truth and failed to advance as light from God's Word increased. With each refusal to advance, God raised up another group as His chosen instrument for the proclamation of truth.

Finally, with the passing of the 1260 years of papal supremacy (see on ch. 12:6, 14) and the arrival of the "time of the end," the time when Heaven's last message (ch. 14:6–12) was to be proclaimed to the world (see on Dan. 7:25; 11:35), God raised up another "remnant," the one designated in Rev. 12:17 (cf. vs. 14–17). This is *the* "remnant" of the long and worthy line of God's chosen people that has survived the fierce onslaughts of the dragon down through history, most particularly the darkness, persecution, and error of the "time, and times, and half a time," or 1260 "days" of vs. 6, 14. It is God's *last* "remnant" by virtue of the fact that it is the appointed herald of His final appeal to the world to accept the gracious gift of salvation (ch. 14:6–12).

From the very first, Seventh-day Adventists have boldly proclaimed the three messages of ch. 14:6–12 as God's last appeal to sinners to accept Christ, and have humbly believed their movement to be the one here designated as the "remnant." No other religious body is proclaiming this composite message, and none other meets the specifications laid down in ch. 12:17. Hence none other has a valid, scriptural basis for claiming to be "*the* remnant" of v. 17.

However, Adventists repudiate emphatically and unequivocally any thought that they alone are children of God and have a claim upon heaven. They believe that all who worship God in full sincerity, that is, in terms of all the revealed will of God that they understand, are presently potential members of that final "remnant" company mentioned in ch. 12:17. Adventists believe that it is their solemn task and joyous privilege to make God's last testing truths so clear and so persuasive as to draw all of God's children into that prophetically foretold company that is making ready for the day of God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 EW 92
3,4 GC 438
4 3T 115; 5T 291
6 GC 55, 266; SR 331
7 EW 146; 3T 328
7–9 SR 19; 1T 440; 6T 456
9 EW 215; GC 438, 582; PP 77, 331, 431
10 COL 166; DA 626, 761; GC 395, 520; MB 57; PK 585; PP 689; TM 37, 504; 2T 106; 5T 34, 95, 137, 286, 470, 620; 6T 11
11 CD 162, 186; EW 114; GC xi; ML 141; MM 264, 296; MYP 347; PP 77; SL 78
12 EW 46; GC ix, 623; PP 689; 1T 178, 210; 2T 161; 3T 327, 374, 407; 4T 210; 5T 297,429, 644; 6T 31; 8T 100; 9T 16
17 DA 398; GC 592; PK 605; TM 39, 133; 1T 223, 330, 337; 2T 105; 3T 110, 571; 5T 213, 449, 472; 8T 41, 117

CHAPTER 13

[4]

1 *A beast riseth out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns, to whom the dragon giveth his power*. 11 *Another beast cometh up out of the earth:* 14 *causeth an image to be made of the former beast,* 15 *and that men should worship it,* 16 *and receive his mark*.

1. And I stood. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "and he stood." If this reading is adopted, it would be better to connect the clause "and he stood upon the sand of the sea" with ch. 12:17, as is done in certain Greek editions and English versions (see RSV). The "he" would refer to the dragon, who stands upon the seashore awaiting the emergence of the beast, whom it is his purpose to invest with his power and authority (ch. 13:2). If the reading "I stood" is adopted, John is simply describing the vantage point from which he saw the beast ascending.

Sand of the sea. The sea here doubtless represents peoples, nations, tongues (see on Rev. 17:1, 2, 8 cf. on Dan. 7:2).

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[4]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 9:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

A beast. For the significance of beasts in symbolic prophecy see on Dan. 7:3. For the identification of the beast see on Rev. 13:2.

Out of the sea. This beast arises "out of the sea." The beast of v. 11 comes "out of the earth." The one arises where there are multitudes of peoples (see above on "sand of the sea"); the other arises where the population is sparse (see on v. 11).

Seven heads. Some identify these heads with those on the dragon, as well as with those on the beast of ch. 17 (see on ch. 12:3). Others see in these heads the various political organizations through which the new beast works after the dragon with his seven heads relinquishes "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (ch. 13:2). For a comment on the number seven see on ch. 1:11.

Ten horns. Some identify these horns with those on the dragon (see on ch. 12:3). Others limit the application of these horns to nations through which the power represented by the beast exercised its will and authority (see on ch. 12:3).

Crowns. Gr. *diadēmata*, "kingly crowns" (see on ch. 12:3). These crowns on the horns confirm the identification of the horns as political powers.

Name. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading "names."

Blasphemy. Gr. *blasphēmia*, meaning "railing," "slander," when directed against men, and impious speech when directed against God. The latter sense is doubtless predominant here. The name or names are represented as being on the heads. They doubtless represent the blasphemous titles assumed by the beast (see on Dan. 7:25).

Leopard … bear … lion. There is doubtless an allusion here to the symbolism of Dan. 7. Of the beasts seen by Daniel the first was like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard. The beast seen by John had physical characteristics drawn from all three. This doubtless denotes that the power represented by the beast of Revelation possessed characteristics prominent in the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Some have noted that John alludes to these powers in the reverse order of their appearance in history, as he looks backward from his day.

Dragon. See on ch. 12:3.

Gave him his power. Though primarily representing Satan, the dragon, in a secondary sense, represents the Roman Empire (see on ch. 12:3). The power succeeding the Roman Empire, which received from the dragon "his power, and his seat, and great authority," is clearly papal Rome. "Out of the ruins of political Rome, arose the great moral Empire in the 'giant form' of the Roman Church" (A. C. Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church* [1900], p. 150). This identification is confirmed in the specifications enumerated in the following verses.

Behind this activity was Satan, seeking to exterminate the church. When he found that his efforts to annihilate the followers of Christ through persecution proved unavailing, he altered his tactics and sought to lure the church away from Christ through the establishment of a vast counterfeit religious system. Instead of working directly through paganism the dragon now worked behind the facade of a professedly Christian organization, hoping thereby to disguise his identity.

Seat. Gr. *thronos*, "throne." The popes ascended the throne of the Caesars. The capital of the papal system was the same as that occupied by the Roman Empire at its height.

Great authority. The papacy exercised control in matters political and religious, and over the consciences of men.

3. One of his heads. See on v. 1.

Wounded. Gr. *sphazō*, "to slay," "to slaughter." The word is translated "slain"in ch. 5:6. The phrase may be translated, "smitten to death." Adventists believe that this prediction met its dramatic fulfillment in 1798 when Berthier, at the head of a French army, entered Rome, declared the political rule of the papacy at an end, and took the pope prisoner to France, where he soon died (see on Dan. 7:25; see GC 439).

However, this incident marked only the climax of a long series of events. The decline of papal power had begun many years before (see Additional Note on Dan. 7). The launching of the Protestant Reformation was a significant event in the long series.

Wound. Gr. *plēgē*, "a blow," "a stroke," also the wound caused by a stroke. Either meaning may be adopted in this text. The "deadly wound" could be either the stroke producing death or the wound producing death.

Was healed. There was a gradual revival in papal life in the years following the revolution in France. The papacy suffered a new setback when in 1870 the Papal States were taken from it. A significant event occurred in 1929 when the Lateran Treaty restored temporal power to the pope, who was given the rule of Vatican City, a section of the city of Rome about 108.7 acres in extent. However, the prophet envisioned a much greater restoration. He saw the wound completely healed, as the Greek implies. Following the healing he saw "all that dwell upon the earth," except a faithful few, worshiping the beast (v. 8; cf. GC 579). This is still future. Though the papacy receives homage from certain groups, vast populations show it no deference. But that is to change. The beast of v. 11 "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (v. 12).

All the world wondered. Or, "all the world was amazed." That the papal power should revive was deemed incredible.

4. Worshipped the dragon. Worshiping the beast is in fact worshiping the dragon, for the beast is but the visible agency of the dragon, carrying out the dragon's program. The era of the revived papacy will also be characterized by a period when spiritism is especially active. Back of spiritism is Satan working "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10). Through Roman Catholism, spiritism, and apostate Protestantism, Satan aims to cause the world to worship him. He will be successful except for a noble remnant that refuses to bow to his demands (Rev. 12:17; 13:8).

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority." Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading, "because he gave the authority to the beast," in place of "which gave power unto the beast." See on v. 2.

Worshipped the beast. See above on "worshipped the dragon."

Who is like? Perhaps a parody on similar expressions about God (see Ex. 15:11; Ps. 35:10; 113:5).

Able to make war. Apparently, resistance to the demands of the beast meant war. The suggestion is that he ruled by force of arms, and that resistance would be futile. Finally Christ and the armies of heaven will be successful in their warfare against him and will cast the beast "alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (ch. 19:20).

5. Great things. For examples of the boastful claims of the papacy see on Dan. 7:25. The specifications of Rev. 13:5–7 clearly identify the power symbolized by the beast with that represented by the little horn of the fourth beast of Dan. 7. Among the parallels the following may be noted: (1) The beast of Rev. 13 had a "mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" (v. 5); the little horn of Dan. 7 also had a "mouth speaking great things" (v. 8). (2) The beast was "to continue forty and two months" (Rev. 13:5; see on ch. 12:6); the horn was to continue "until a time and times and the dividing of time" (see on Dan. 7:25). (3) The beast was "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:7); the horn "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (Dan. 7:21).

Blasphemies. See on v. 1; cf. v. 6, where these blasphemies are further described.

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority."

Continue. Gr. *poieō*, "to do," "to perform," "to execute."

Forty and two months. See on ch. 12:6; cf. on ch. 11:2.

6. Blaspheme his name. By assuming divine titles. For examples see on Dan. 7:25.

His tabernacle. This is the second object of his blasphemy. This power presumes to set up his temple on earth, and thus draws the attention of the people away from the sanctuary in heaven, the "true tabernacle," where Jesus ministers as high priest (Heb. 8:1, 2). But this power seeks to cast down the work of this sanctuary (see on Dan. 8:11; cf. vs. 12, 13). The heavenly ministry of the sacrifice of Christ is discounted, and the sacrifice of the mass on earth is substituted.

That dwell in heaven. This, the third aspect of the blasphemy of the papal power, touches the inhabitants of the heavenly realm. The reference is probably to the members of the Godhead and those associated with them in service for mankind. This has been fulfilled in part in the Catholic claim to have power to forgive sins, also in ascribing powers and virtues to Mary that apply only to Christ. Thus the minds of men are turned away from the heavenly mediatorial work of Jesus to the confessional on earth.

The papal head has also claimed power over the angels of God. "Indeed, the excellence and power of the Roman pontiff is not only in the sphere of heavenly things, earthly things, and those of the lower regions, but even above the angels, than whom he himself is greater" (translated from Lucius Ferraris, "Papa II," *Prompta Bibliotheca*, Vol. VI, p. 27; see on Dan. 7:25).

7. War with the saints. The language here is almost identical with that in Dan. 7:21, "The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." For the fulfillment of this prediction see on Dan. 7:25.

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority."

Over all kindreds. This refers to the sphere of its operations, and applies to the heyday of the papacy, perhaps during the Middle Ages, when it exercised almost undisputed sway over Europe (see Additional Note on Dan. 7), but especially when, in the future, the power of the papacy will be more fully revived (see on Rev. 13:3; 17:8).

8. All … shall worship him. This is especially true of the period of the revived papacy (see on v. 3). The manner in which such universal adoration will be achieved is described in vs. 11–18. Compare 6T 14.

The book of life. See on Phil. 4:3.

Lamb slain. See on ch. 5:6.

From the foundation of the world. This phrase may be connected with either "written" or "slain." Both ideas are supported in the Bible. The viewpoint that names are recorded from the foundation of the world is found in ch. 17:8, and amplified in statements such as, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34), and, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (see on Eph. 1:4).

On the other hand, the idea that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world is closely related to Peter's statement, "… as of a lamb without blemish …: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:19, 20). Inasmuch as the decision that Christ would die for the guilty race was reached before this world was created, and confirmed at the time man fell (see PP 63, 64), He may in that sense be regarded as though slain from the foundation of the world.

9. Ear, let him hear. See on ch. 2:7.

10. Leadeth into captivity. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the word "leadeth." Without it the clause maybe translated, "If a man is destined for [or "goes into"] captivity. …" The idea may be regarded as similar to that expressed in Jer. 15:2, "Such as are for death, to death. …"

The KJV reading, which has some textual support, assures the persecuted children of God that those who pursue them and condemn them to exile and to death will themselves meet a similar fate. A partial fulfillment of this may be seen in the capture and exile of the pope in 1798 (see on Dan. 7:25; see Additional Note on Dan. 7).

Some commentators interpret v. 10 as a warning to Christians not to use force against the antichristian power.

The sword. Having used the sword, the beast will, in the end, perish by the sword of divine justice. Compare the Saviour's statement, "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē*, "perseverance," "fortitude," "steadfast endurance." *Hupomonē* is from *hupo*, "under," and *menō*, "to remain." The Greek word implies more than a passive resignation; it denotes an active endurance (see on Rom. 5:3). During the warfare of the beast the saints steadfastly endure.

Faith. Gr. *pistis*, "belief," "trust," "confidence," "faith," "faithfulness." For the meaning "belief," "confidence," etc., see on ch. 14:12. For the meaning "faithfulness" see on Heb. 11:1; cf. on Hab. 2:4. Either the active sense of "faith" or the passive sense of "faithfulness" suits the context, although the closely parallel phrase in Rev. 14:12 seems to require the active sense (see comment there).

11. Another beast. That is, another in addition to the one already mentioned (v. 1). The Greek implies that it is of the same kind as the first beast. This is confirmed as its characteristics are unfolded. It works in close collaboration with the first beast.

Coming up. Gr. *anabainō*, "to ascend," "to rise," "to spring up." In Matt. 13:7 *anabainō* is used of growing plants. The form of the Greek word calls attention to the process of emergence. The prophet sees the action as going on.

Out of the earth. The first beast arose out of the sea (see on v. 1). The four beasts of Dan. 7 also arose from the sea (v. 3). Since "sea" represents peoples and nations (see on Rev. 13:1; 17:1, 2, 8), "earth" may reasonably be assumed to represent a sparsely settled

region. The nation thus represented would therefore not arise by war, conquest, and occupation, but would develop into greatness in a region of few inhabitants.

Adventist commentators have seen in this second beast a symbol of the United States of America. This power accurately fulfills the specifications of the prophecy. When the first beast was going into captivity in 1798 (see on ch. 13:10) the United States was growing into prominence and power. The nation arose, not in the Old World, with its teeming multitudes, but in the New World, with its relatively few inhabitants (see GC 439–441).

Had. Literally, "was having."

Two horns. These may be taken to represent the two notable features of the American system of government, civil and religious liberty, both of which are guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States. Civil liberty found its expression in a republican form of government and religious liberty in Protestantism.

A lamb. A symbol of youthfulness and peaceful intent. Other nations have been described as wild beasts because of their warlike attitudes. This beast with the horns of a lamb could well indicate a nation that, in the beginning of its history, had no such aspirations. Its main concern was to live peacefully, order its own affairs, and be a haven of rest for the oppressed of many nations.

Spake. Literally, "was speaking," that is, it was its habit to speak as a dragon. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "is speaking." This tense agrees with that of the following verses, which describe the activities of the beast during the period when it speaks like a dragon. The narrative of its exploits is told in the dramatic present tense.

As a dragon. There is a striking contradiction between the appearance and actions of the beast. In appearance it is gentle and apparently harmless, but in action it is persecuting and cruel, as vs. 12–18 reveal. When the prophecy is applied to the United States it is immediately apparent that fulfillment of the prediction is future. The United States today continues to maintain the principles of freedom guaranteed in the Constitution. The manner in which a change in policy will be brought about is outlined in the present prophecy. The change comes in connection with the final crisis immediately preceding the time when "the kingdoms of this world … become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15; cf. Ps. 2:2; Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27).

12. Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority." This verse is an amplification of the clause, "spake as a dragon" (v. 11). The fulfillment is future (see on v. 11). During the height of its power the first beast, the papacy (see on v. 2), exercised widespread authority in both religious and political matters (see on Dan. 7:8). For the second beast to exercise *all* the authority of the first beast, it will have to enter the field of religion, and seek to dominate religious worship. For the United States to take this step will mean a complete reversal of its present policy of granting full freedom of religion to its citizens. Such a step is here predicted (see 5T 451).

The change in policy will doubtless come in innocently. Repeated attempts have been made to enact stricter laws enforcing Sunday as a rest day—earlier on religious, more recently on so-called social, grounds—penalizing observers of another day. Innocent as it may seem, any attempt to regulate a religious day by law violates the fundamental principle of religious liberty. This prophecy predicts that Sunday, an institution of the papacy (see on Dan. 7:25), will one day be enforced by law under threat of economic

sanctions and worse for those who keep the Sabbath (see Rev. 13:12–18; cf. p. 977; 1T 353, 354; GC 604, 605).

Before him. That is, in his presence. The first beast, who had been fatally wounded, has come back to life, and is once more active in world affairs. His promoter and agent is the second beast.

Causeth the earth. That is, the inhabitants of the earth. The movement here described is more than a national enterprise; it takes on international proportions (cf. GC 562, 579; TM 37; 6T 18, 19, 352, 395; 7T 141).

To worship. Prophecy here points to the enactment of some religious measure the observance of which would be regarded as an act of worship, in that the worshiper, by observing it, acknowledges the authority of the first beast in matters of religion. A hint as to the nature of the enactment is found in ch. 14:9–12. These verses contrast the saints with the worshipers of the beast and his image and note that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the saints is the keeping of the commandments of God (v. 12). According to Daniel the power here represented as the beast was to "think to change times and laws" (ch. 7:25). History records a most audacious attempt to change the divine law—in the substitution of Sunday in place of the Sabbath of the Lord (see on Dan. 7:25). It is possible, then, to see a specific application here to a civil decree requiring the observance of Sunday, an institution of the papacy, and forbidding observance of the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments. In such a way men would be led to "worship" the "first beast." They would heed its command above that of God in the matter of the day of worship. See further on Rev. 13:16, 17. See GC 422–450; 6T 352.

The matter of the day of worship is, of course, only one feature of the universal homage the "beast" will eventually receive (see on v. 8). What is here envisioned is a universal movement under the leadership of Satan, who is seeking to secure for himself the allegiance of the inhabitants of this earth. He will succeed in uniting the various religious elements and in securing the loyalty of men to the new organization patterned after the old (see on v. 14). He is the power behind the "beast." It is he, the real antichrist, who is working to make himself as God (see 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; cf. GC 593; TM 62; 6T 14; 9T 230).

13. Wonders. Gr. *sēmeia* (see on ch. 12:1). This reveals the agency by which the prince of evil will secure the allegiance of earth's inhabitants. These miracles will deceive men into believing that the new organization, the image (see on ch. 13:14), has the blessing of God resting upon it.

So that. The last clause in v. 13 is explanatory of the first. Among the signs he works are conspicuous ones that attract the attention of men. The bringing down of fire from heaven may be an attempt to counterfeit the miracle on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:17–39). As the ancient sign gave evidence of the power of the true God, so the beast will make it appear that God is supporting his program. Seventh-day Adventists expect these miracles to come through the agency of spiritism (see GC 588). Satan, claiming to be God, will seek to support his claim by means of undeniable miracles (see 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; 9T 16).

14. Deceiveth. Jesus warned concerning "false Christ, and false prophets" who would arise and "shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). Paul declared that the Antichrist would work in the last days "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9, 10). In preparation for Armageddon "spirits of devils,

working miracles" will "go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world" (Rev. 16:14). In general, the world today does not believe in miracles. What certain groups claim as miracles, these skeptics attribute to chance circumstances, to sleight of hand, or to fraud. Physical science has no place in its scheme for the supernatural. Satan is well pleased to have a general disbelief in miracles. It suits his purpose to deceive. ch. Verses 13 and 14 of 13 reveal that when the time is right he will employ his supernatural power in a special way to deceive. "No mere impostures are here foretold" (GC 553). Men, unable to explain Satan's miracles, will attribute them to the power of God. The whole world will be led captive. See 9T 16; GC 589, 624; EW 88.

Image. Gr. *eikōn*, "a likeness," "an image." In 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15 Christ is spoken of as the *eikōn* of God. It is the purpose of the plan of salvation to transform man into the *eikōn* of Christ. An *eikōn* implies an archetype and in many respects is like its archetype.

An image to the first beast would be an organization functioning on much the same principles as that beast's organization. Among the principles by which the first beast operated was the use of the secular arm to support religious institutions. In imitation the second beast will repudiate its principles of freedom. The church will prevail upon the state to enforce its dogmas. State and church will unite, and the result will be the loss of religious liberty and the persecution of dissenting minorities. Compare on Rev. 13:12; see GC 443–448.

Wound by a sword. See on v. 3.

15. Life. Gr. *pneuma*, "spirit," "wind," "breath." The symbolical image John saw in vision became animated by the miracle-working power of the second beast. The new organization begins to function, and like its predecessor, threatens with extinction those who refuse compliance.

Speak. The first thing this newly formed image does is to "speak," undoubtedly through its laws and enactments.

Cause. Having spoken officially through its laws, the image next puts them into effect. Since these are religious laws, they will cut across the conscientious convictions of many. Force will be exercised in the carrying out of these enactments.

Should be killed. This is the story of the ages. Legislation in matters of religion has ever been followed by persecution. It was so during the Middle Ages: witness the massacre of the Albigenses, Waldenses, and others—by the civil power, to be sure, but prompted by the dominant church of the day. In its attempt to make all earth's inhabitants give allegiance to the first beast (see on v. 8) second beast will issue a decree threatening with death all who maintain their loyalty to God (see GC 615; PK 605, 606).

16. Causeth all. Everyone is affected by this legislation. Apparently only the faithful remnant refuse compliance (see v. 8; cf. ch. 12:17).

Mark. Gr. *charagma*, "an impress," "a stamp," "a mark." This is evidently some badge of loyalty to the beast, some special feature that denotes that the one displaying such a mark worships the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (v. 8). Adventist interpreters understand this mark to be not a literal brand but some sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast. The controversy at that time will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth command (see on

ch. 14:12). Hence Sunday observance will constitute such a sign, but not until the time when the beast's power will be revived and Sunday observance in place of Sabbath observance becomes law. Adventists hold that simultaneously the third angel's message will warn against the reception of the mark (ch. 14:9–11). This message, swelling into a loud cry (ch. 18:1–4), will enlighten men as to the issues involved. When the issues are thus clearly before them, and men nevertheless choose to support an institution of the beast, observing it and disobeying God's Sabbath command, they thereby show their allegiance to the beast power and receive the mark.

Right hand … foreheads. This mark being in the hand or in the forehead may indicate that not only one's labor (the hand) but also one's belief is affected. The phrase may also designate two classes—those who submit to the decrees of the beast merely from expediency and those who so do from personal conviction.

17. Buy or sell. This stern measure will be taken in an effort to secure compliance with the dictates of the image. But the measure will be unavailing (see on ch. 14:1, 12). This measure will doubtless bring on the death decree (see on ch. 13:15).

Mark. See on v. 16.

Or the name. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the word "or." If it is omitted, the phrase "name of the beast" may be considered to be in apposition with the word "mark." The passage would then read, "the mark, that is, the name of the beast." This would imply that the mark John saw in vision was the name of the beast. This relationship may be compared with the seal of God placed on the forehead of the saints (ch. 7:2), concerning whom John later declared that they had "his Father's name written in their foreheads" (ch. 14:1). Compare on ch. 14:11.

The word "or," however, appears in P, the oldest extant Greek manuscript of Revelation, and may well have been in the autograph copy. If so, the phrases, "the mark," "the name of the beast," "the number of his name," being connected by "or," may indicate degrees of affiliation with the beast or his image. God condemns any degree of association (ch. 14:9–11).

Number of his name. See on v. 18.

18. Here is wisdom. Compare the phrase, "here is the mind which hath wisdom" (ch. 17:9). The wisdom here commended is doubtless that to which Paul refers in Eph. 1:17. Only by divine enlightenment will men understand the mysteries of the Word of God (see on 1 Cor. 2:14).

Understanding. Or, "intelligence." Those who wish to know the meaning of the cryptic number may understand.

Count. Or, "calculate."

Number of the beast. It should be noted that the beast has already been conclusively identified (see on vs. 1–10). The number provides confirmatory evidence of this.

Since the early days of Christianity there has been much discussion as to the significance of 666. One of the earliest to write on the subject was Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–c. 202). He identified the beast as the Antichrist, and believed that the numerical values of the letters of his name would add up to 666. He suggested the name *Teitan*, a name sometimes accounted divine, as having great probability. He also suggested, but as much less probable, the name *Lateinos*, this being the name of the last kingdom of the four seen by Daniel. At the same time he warned that "it is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and

casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned" (*Against Heresies v. 30. 3*; *ANF*, vol. 1, p. 559).

Since Irenaeus' day 666 has been applied to many names. The number alone cannot identify the beast since numerous names can add up to 666. However, inasmuch as the beast has already been identified, the number 666 must have a relationship to this power. Otherwise there would be no valid reason for the angel giving John the information contained in v. 18, at this point in the prophetic narrative.

An interpretation that gained currency in the period following the Reformation was that 666 stood for *Vicarius Filii Dei*, meaning "vicar of the Son of God," one of the titles for the pope of Rome. The numerical value of the component letters of this title totals 666 as follows:

V		5
I		1
C		100
A	.....	
R	.....	
I		1
V		5
(U=V)		
S	.....	
F	.....	
I		1
L		50
I		1
I		1
D		500
E	.....	
I		1
		666

This interpretation was based on the identification of the pope as Antichrist, the historic Reformation concept. The principal exponent of this interpretation was Andreas Helwig (c. 1572–1643; see L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers,* vol. 2, pp. 605–608). Many since his day have adopted this interpretation. Inasmuch as this commentary identifies the beast as the papacy, it also accepts this view as being the beast thus far presented, though recognizing that there may be more implied in the cryptogram than this interpretation provides.

Regarding the title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, the Catholic journal *Our Sunday Visitor,* of April 18, 1915, reported in answer to a query, "What are the letters supposed to be in the Pope's crown, and what do they signify, if anything?" "The letters inscribed in the Pope's mitre are these: *Vicarius Filii Dei*, which is the Latin for Vicar of the Son of God. Catholics hold that the Church which is a visible society must have a visible head" (p. 3). The issue of November 15, 1914, admitted that the Latin numerals added together total

666, but went on to declare that many other names also yield this total. In the issue of August 3, 1941, page 7, the subject of *Vicarius Filii Dei* again came up for discussion, and the statement was made that this title is not inscribed on the pope's tiara. The tiara, it averred, bears no inscription whatsoever (p. 7). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* distinguishes between the mitre and the tiara by describing the tiara as a non-liturgical ornament and the mitre as one worn for liturgical functions. Whether the inscription *Vicarius Filii Dei* appears on the tiara or the mitre is really beside the point. The title is admittedly applied to the pope, and that is sufficient for the purposes of prophecy.

Number of a man. The beast represents a human organization.

Six hundred threescore and six. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading 616. However, the reading 666 is overwhelmingly attested.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 GC 54, 445, 578; SR 331
2, 3 GC 439
3 GC 579; 6T 14
5–7 GC 54, 439; SR 331
8 AA 229; GC 579; PP 63
10, 11 GC 439
11 GC 440; TM 117; 5T 452; 9T 229
11, 12 GC 441, 442, 578
11–17 DA 122
13 EW 59, 87; GC 612
13, 14 GC 553; SR 395
14 GC 441, 443, 445, 578; 5T 698
15–17 EW 36, 67, 282; GC 635; LS 117; PK 605; 1T 204, 354; 4T 251; 5T 213, 450, 473
16 GC 604; PK 189; 9T 16
16, 17 GC 445, 450, 579; SR 382; 5T 81, 216, 525; 6T 17, 130; 8T 117; 9T 232
17 5T 152

CHAPTER 14

1 *The Lamb standing on mount Sion with his company*. 6 *An angel preacheth the gospel*. 8 *The fall of Babylon*. 15 *The harvest of the world, and putting in of the sickle*. 20 *The vintage and winepress of the wrath of God*.

1. I looked. Rather, "I saw."

A Lamb. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "the Lamb." The definite article, if it is accepted, doubtless refers to the Lamb mentioned in ch. 5:6 (see comment there). For the use of the article to refer back to previously introduced prophetic items see on Dan. 7:13; cf. on Rev. 1:13.

Mount Sion. See on Ps. 48:2. Rev. 14:1–5 is closely connected with ch. 13:11–18. The 144,000 are here shown with the Lamb on Mt. Zion to indicate their triumph over the beast and his image. Earlier John had seen them passing through the severest trial; he had seen them boycotted and condemned as worthy of death. But in their darkest hour they were delivered and are now with the Lamb, eternally secure from the conflicts of earth.

Hundred forty and four thousand. For the identity of this group see on ch. 7:4.

His Father's name. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "his name and the name of his Father." In ch. 7:3 the 144,000 are said to be sealed "in their foreheads." There is, therefore, a close connection between the seal and the divine name. Evidently in

vision the seal that John saw contained the name of the Father and the Son. Ancient seals contained the name of the authenticating agent. For examples of inscriptions on these seals see on ch. 7:2. Applied to the 144,000, the names represent (1) ownership—the 144,000 belong to God; (2) character—the 144,000 reflect the image of Jesus fully. Compare on ch. 13:17, where the mark of the beast and the name of the beast are closely connected.

In their foreheads. Compare the mark of the beast on the forehead (see on ch. 13:16).

2. I heard a voice. Or, "I heard a sound." Some think that the harpers and singers here are not the 144,000, but the angels, the message of whose song only the 144,000 are able to understand. However, in ch. 15:2, 3 the 144,000 are clearly represented as having harps and as singing, so that others believe the 144,000 are referred to in ch. 14:2 also.

Voice of many waters. Or, "sound of many waters" (see on ch. 1:15).

Voice of a great thunder. Or, "sound of great thunder." Thunder is here, as elsewhere, connected with the divine presence (see Job 37:4; Ps. 29; Rev. 4:5; 6:1).

Voice of harpers. Literally, "sound as of harpers." The sound that John heard was like that of harpers. Perhaps he did not see actual instruments being played, hence his cautious identification. For a discussion of ancient harps see Vol. III, pp. 34–36.

3. Sung. Literally, "sing." The narrative is told in the dramatic present tense (cf. on ch. 13:11).

The throne. The throne has earlier been introduced (ch. 4:2).

Before the four beasts. See on ch. 4:6.

Elders. See on ch. 4:4.

No man could learn. The experience is of such a personal nature that only those who pass through it can appreciate its significance. To them the song is a treasured and comprehensive summation of the experiences through which they have passed in the closing stages of the conflict between good and evil.

Redeemed. Gr. *agorazō*, "to buy," "to purchase." The word is translated "buy" in chs. 3:18; 18:11. Compare the phrases "redeemed us to God" (ch. 5:9), "redeemed from among men" (ch. 14:4). Compare on Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 6:20.

4. Defiled. Gr. *molunō*, "to defile," "to stain," "to soil" such things as the conscience (1 Cor. 8:7) or clothing (Rev. 3:4). Here doubtless the reference is, figuratively, to the defilement of illicit relationships (see below on "virgins"). The tense of the Greek verb may be significant. It refers the action to a specific point, or period, of time, here doubtless to the time when the coalition of religious elements, symbolized by "women" (see below on "women") will bring every pressure to bear upon the saints to renounce their fealty to God and His commandments and to join their organization (see on chs. 16:14; 17:2, 6). Any yielding would be an act of defilement. Now standing victoriously upon Mt. Zion, the saints are commended for their fidelity.

Women. A woman is often used in Scripture to represent a church, a pure woman the true church and an immoral woman the apostate church (see on ch. 12:1). In ch. 17:1–5 (see comment there) the Church of Rome and various apostate churches who follow in her footsteps are symbolized by an impure woman and her daughters. It is to these churches that the prophet here doubtless refers (see above on "defiled").

Virgins. Gr. *parthenoi*, a term used of both men and women, here of men. This is clear both from the Greek and from the figure of "virgins" not being defiled with

"women." Because the whole passage is metaphorical, literal virginity, whether of men or of women, is not the point under consideration. If it were, this passage would contradict other scriptures that commend marriage and the marriage relation (see on 1 Cor. 7:1–5). The saints are here called virgins because they have either kept themselves aloof from Babylon or no longer have dealings with her (see on Rev. 18:4). They have refused any connection with Babylon and her daughters at the time when these have become the agents of Satan in his final effort to eradicate the saints (see on ch. 13:15). They were not defiled by association with this union of religious elements rallied by Satan, though they may formerly have belonged to one of the various bodies now amalgamated.

Follow the Lamb. This seems to point to some special privilege the 144,000 will have, the details concerning which are not revealed and hence are a matter of conjecture. Compare on ch. 7:14–17.

Redeemed from. See on v. 3.

Firstfruits. Gr. *aparchē*, "first fruits," related to the verb *aparchomai*, "to make a beginning [in sacrifice]," "to offer first fruits." The ancient Israelites offered first fruits to the Lord, both as personal (Deut. 26:1–11) and as national (Lev. 23:10, 17) offerings. The offering of the first fruits was an acknowledgement of the goodness of God in giving the harvest. The national offering also had typical significance (see on 1 Cor. 15:20).

Applied to the 144,000, the term "first-fruits" may be understood in two ways.

1. As being the first installment, or pledge, of the great harvest. The 144,000 are those who are victors in the great conflict with the beast and his image (see on ch. 14:1). From this struggle they are delivered and are now safe before the throne of God. "These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as 'the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb'" (GC 649).
2. As meaning simply "gift," or "offering." In the LXX *aparchē* is most frequently the translation of the Heb. *terumah*, "a contribution," "an offering." In Ex 25:2, 3 *terumah* is used for the contribution of the children of Israel for the building of the sanctuary. Frequently *terumah* describes the "heave offering" (see Num. 5:9, where the LXX has *aparchē*). Ancient inscriptions show that *aparchē* was commonly used for a "gift" to a goddess, without any reference to time. Where *aparchē* is the translation of *terumah* there is also no reference to time.

The 144,000 may thus be considered as "firstfruits" either in the sense of being a part of a larger harvest or in the sense of being a gift, or offering, to God.

5. Was found. The form of the Greek verb suggests that a certain point of time is under consideration. At that point of time investigation proves the 144,000 to be faultless. This does not mean that they had never erred, but that by the grace of God they had overcome all defects of character.

Guile. Gr. *dolos*, "deceit," "subtlety," "fraud," "guile." Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading *pseudos*, "falsehood," "lie." The gospel of Jesus Christ changes sinful, erring man into one who has no pretense, no make-believe, no deceit, no sin.

Without fault. Gr. *amōmos*, "faultless," "blameless" (see on Eph. 1:4; cf. COL 69; TM 506).

Before the throne. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase.

6. I saw. A new scene begins. Chronologically the events represented in this vision precede those represented by the vision of vs. 1–5.

Another. Gr. *allos*, another of the same kind. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word. Many angels have already been mentioned (chs. 1:1, 20; 5:2; 7:1; etc.), so that the designation "another" is not necessary.

Angel. This is a symbolic vision. The angel represents God's saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel, especially the features mentioned in this verse, at a time when the "judgment is come" (v. 7). It is, of course, also true that literal angels assist men in the task of proclaiming the gospel, but this is not the predominant idea here.

Midst of heaven. The angel of ch. 8:13 was also seen flying through the midst of heaven. The area of flight indicates the worldwide nature of the angel's work and message. The work grows and develops until it is brought to the sight and hearing of all mankind.

Everlasting. Gr. *aiōnios* (see on Matt. 25:41). The Scriptures elsewhere speak of the "glorious" gospel (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11), but only here is the word "everlasting" used in connection with the gospel of the grace of God. There is but one gospel to save men. It will continue as long as there are men to be saved. There never will be another gospel.

Gospel. Gr. *euaggelion* (see on Mark 1:1).

To preach. Gr. *euaggelizō*, "to proclaim good tidings," a verb form related to *euaggelion* (see above). Compare the use of *euaggelizō* in Rom. 1:15; 10:15.

Dwell on the earth. As indicated by the following phrases, a worldwide proclamation of the gospel is here envisioned.

Every nation. The universality of the message is emphasized by this and the following phrases.

Kindred. Or, "tribe."

7. Loud voice. The message of both the first angel and the third angel are given with a "loud voice" (v. 9). The loud voice indicates that the message will be proclaimed so that all may hear. It also emphasizes the importance of the message.

Fear. Gr. *phobeō*, "to fear," "to reverence." *Phobeō* is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God, but in the sense of coming to Him with reverence and awe. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God, of full surrender to His will (cf. on Deut. 4:10).

God. The message to fear God is especially timely in the period represented by the preaching of this angel, for men are worshiping gods of materialism and pleasure and many others of their own and devising.

Glory. Gr. *doxa* (see on Rom. 3:23). Here *doxa* doubtless signifies "honor," "praise," "homage." Compare Ps. 115:1; Isa. 42:12; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 25.

Hour. Or, "time," not a literal hour. Compare this use of "hour" in John 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; Rev. 14:15. Conceived of in this way, it is possible to understand the phrase "hour of his judgment" as referring to the general time when the judgment will take place and not as necessarily referring to the precise moment when the judgment begins. Thus it is possible to say that the first angel's message was proclaimed in the years preceding 1844 even though the actual work of judgment had not yet begun (see below on "judgment").

Judgment. Gr. *krisis*, "the act of judging," contrasted with *krima*, "the sentence of judgment" (see on ch. 17:1). Seventh-day Adventist expositors understand the judgment here mentioned as that which began in 1844, represented in type by the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary (see on Dan. 8:14). That the reference here is not to the executive judgment at the coming of Christ when all receive their rewards, is seen by the fact that the messages of the three angels (Rev. 14:6–12) precede the second coming of Christ (v. 14). Furthermore, the message concerning the judgment is accompanied by an appeal and a warning that reveal that the day of salvation has not passed. Men may still turn to God and escape the wrath to come. Historically, the preaching of William Miller and his associates in the period from 1831 to 1844, concerning the close of the 2300 days in 1844, may be regarded as marking the beginning of the message of the first angel (see F. D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry,* p. 284). But that message has had validity ever since and will continue to have until the curtain falls on man's opportunity for salvation.

Is come. Or, "has come."

Worship. Gr. *proskuneō*, "to do homage," "to worship." The worship of God is in contrast with the worship of the beast (ch. 13:8, 12) and that of its image (v. 15). In the crisis soon to come, the inhabitants of the earth will be called upon to make their choice, as did the three Hebrew worthies in days of old, between the worship of the true God and that of false gods (Dan. 3). The message of the first angel is designed to prepare men to make the proper choice and to stand firm in the time of crisis.

Made heaven, and earth. The Creator of the universe is the true and only object of worship. No man, no angel, is worthy of worship. This is the prerogative of God only. Creatorship is one of the distinguishing features of the true God in contrast with false deities (Jer. 10:11, 12). The appeal to worship God as Creator has become especially timely in the years following the initial preaching of the first angel's message because of the rapid spread of the theory of evolution. Furthermore, the call to worship the God of heaven as Creator of all things implies that due heed be given to the sign of God's creative works—the Sabbath of the Lord (see on Ex. 20:8–11). If the Sabbath had been kept as God intended, it would have served as a great safeguard against infidelity and evolution (see Acts 14:15; PP 336). The Sabbath will be a point especially controverted in the closing crisis (see on Rev. 13:16).

8. Followed. Gr. *akoloutheō*, "to accompany," "to follow" (see Matt. 19:27, 28; Mark 1:18, where the word has the idea of accompanying Jesus personally). It seems to have both meanings in this text. In point of time the second angel follows the first, but it is also true that the first angel continues his ministry when the second angel joins him. In this sense the second angel's message accompanies that of the first.

Another angel. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the inclusion of the word "second." In some manuscripts the word for "second" stands in place of the phrase "another angel"; in others, as an addition to the phrase; still other manuscripts read "a second angel" instead of "another angel."

Saying. The first and third angels' messages are proclaimed with a "loud voice" (vs. 7, 9). The message concerning the fall of Babylon is later proclaimed with a loud voice (see on ch. 18:1, 2).

Babylon. The ancient, literal city by this name was already largely a desolate ruin in John's day (see on Isa. 13:19). As with so many other terms and expressions in the

Revelation, the significance of this name (see on Acts 3:16) may best be understood in terms of the role of its historical counterpart in OT times (see pp. 867–869; see on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1; Eze. 26:13; Rev. 16:12, 16; Additional Note on Chapter 18). The designation "mystery, Babylon" in ch. 17:5 specifically identifies the name as figurative (see on Rom. 11:25; Rev. 1:20; 17:5; cf. on ch. 16:12).

In Babylonian the name *Bab–ilu* (Babel, or Babylon) meant "gate of the gods," but the Hebrews derogatorily associated it with *balal*, a word in their language meaning "to confuse" (see on Gen. 11:9). The rulers of Babylon doubtless called their city the "gate" of the gods in the sense that they chose to think of it as the place where the gods consorted with men, to order the affairs of earth (see on Judges 9:35; Ruth 4:1; 1 Kings 22:10; Jer. 22:3). The name thus seems to have reflected the claim of the Babylonian kings that they had been commissioned to rule the world by divine mandate (see Vol. II, p. 157; PP 119; see on Gen. 11:4).

Babylon was founded by Nimrod (see on Gen. 10:10; 11:1–9). From the very beginning the city was emblematic of disbelief in the true God and defiance of His will (see on Gen. 11:4–9), and its tower a monument to apostasy, a citadel of rebellion against Him. The prophet Isaiah identifies Lucifer as the invisible king of Babylon (see on Isa. 14:4, 12–14). In fact, it would appear that Satan designed to make Babylon the center and agency of his master plan to secure control of the human race, even as God purposed to work through Jerusalem (see Vol. IV, pp. 26–30). Thus, throughout OT times, the two cities typified the forces of evil and good at work in the world. The founders of Babylon aspired to set up a government entirely independent of God, and had He not intervened, they would eventually have succeeded in banishing righteousness from the earth (PP 123; cf. on Dan. 4:17). For this reason God saw fit to destroy the tower and to scatter its builders (see on Gen. 11:7, 8). A period of temporary success was followed by more than a millennium of decline and subjection to other nations (see Vol. I, pp. 136, 137; Vol. II, p. 92; see on Isa. 13:1; Dan. 2:37).

When Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilt Babylon it became one of the wonders of the ancient world (see Additional Note on Dan. 4). His plan to make his kingdom universal and eternal (see on Dan. 3:1; 4:30) was a success to the extent that, in splendor and power, the new Babylonian Empire surpassed its predecessors (see Vol. II, pp. 92–94; see on chs. 2:37, 38; 4:30). However, it also became haughty and cruel, (see Ed 176). It conquered God's people and threatened with defeat His purpose for them as a nation. In a dramatic series of events God humbled Nebuchadnezzar and secured the submission of his will (see Vol. IV, pp. 751, 752). But his successors refused to humble themselves before God (see Dan. 5:18–22), and eventually the kingdom was weighed in the balances of heaven, found wanting, and its mandate revoked by the decree of the divine Watcher (see on Dan. 5:26–28). Later Babylon became one of the capitals of the Persian Empire, but it was partly destroyed by Xerxes (cf. Vol. III, pp. 459, 460). Over the centuries the city gradually lost more and more of its importance and eventually, toward the close of the 1st century A.D., virtually ceased to exist (see on Isa. 13:19; Rev. 18:21).

Ever since the fall of ancient Babylon Satan has sought, through one world power after another, to control the world, and would probably long since have succeeded had it not been for repeated instances of divine intervention (see on Dan. 2:39–43). Undoubtedly his most nearly successful attempt to subvert the church has been through the papal apostasy of the Middle Ages (see Vol. IV, p. 837; see on Dan. 7:25). But God

intervened to prevent the success of each subsequent threat to the ultimate accomplishment of His purposes (see Rev. 12:5, 8, 16), and the nations have never been able to "cleave" together (see on Dan. 2:43). Evil is inherently divisive. However, near the end of time Satan will be permitted to achieve what appears, briefly, to be success (see on Rev. 16:13, 14, 16; 17:12–14).

Apparently toward the close of the 1st century A.D. Christians were already referring to the city and empire of Rome by the cryptic title Babylon (see on 1 Peter 5:13). By that time the once magnificent literal city of Babylon lay, almost, if not altogether, in ruins, an uninhabited waste, and thus a graphic illustration of the impending fate of mystical Babylon. The Jews were again in exile under the merciless hand of Rome (see Vol. V, pp. 69–80; Vol. VI, p. 87), even as they had once been exiled by Babylon, and Christians also experienced repeated sporadic persecution at her hand (see Vol. VI, pp. 61, 83, 84, 87). Among Jews and Christians alike, Babylon thus became an appropriate and incriminating term to describe imperial Rome.

During the early Christian centuries the cryptic designation Babylon for the city and empire of Rome appears commonly in both Jewish and Christian literature. For instance, Book V of the Sibylline Oracles, a pseudepigraphical Jewish production dating from about A.D. 125 (see Vol. V, p. 89), gives what purports to be a prophecy of the fate of Rome closely parallel to the description of that of mystical Babylon in the Revelation. Speaking of Rome as a "wicked city" that loves "magic," indulges in "adulteries," and has a "bloodthirsty heart and a godless mind," and observing that "many faithful saints of the Hebrews have perished" because of her, the writer predicts her eventual desolation: "In widowhood shalt thou sit beside thy banks. … But thou hast said, I am unique, and none shall bring ruin on me. But now God … shall destroy thee and all of thine" (vs. 37–74; R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 400; cf. Rev. 18:5–8). In 2 Baruch, another pseudepigraphical work of the 1st or 2d century A.D., the name Babylon is used of Rome in the same way as in the Revelation (ch. 11:1; Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 486). Similarly, the writer of the Jewish Midrash Rabbah, on S. of Sol. 1:6, says, "They called the place Rome Babylon" (Soncino ed., p. 60). Tertullian, who lived at the close of the second century, specifically declares that the term Babylon in the Apocalypse refers to the capital city of imperial Rome (*Against Marcion* iii. 13; *Answer to the Jews* 9; see also Irenaeus *Against Heresies* v. 26. 1). Among the Jews of early Christian times Edom was another cryptic designation for Rome (see Midrash Rabbah, on S. of Sol. 1:6, p. 60; also Talmud *Makkoth* 12a, Soncino ed., p. 80).

Babylon, both literal and mystical, has thus long been recognized as the traditional enemy of God's truth and people. As used in the Revelation the name is symbolic of all apostate religious organizations and their leadership, from antiquity down to the close of time (see on chs. 17:5; 18:24). A comparison of the many passages of the OT where the sins and fate of literal Babylon are set forth at length, with those in the Revelation descriptive of mystical Babylon, makes evident the appropriateness of the figurative application of the name (see on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1; Rev. 16:12–21; 17; 18; see Additional Note on Chapter 18). A perusal of these and other passages reveals the importance, also, of a thorough study of the OT with respect to literal Babylon as a background for understanding the import of NT passages relating to mystical Babylon.

Is fallen, is fallen. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the second "is fallen." The passage seems to echo Isa. 21:9, where in the LXX textual

evidence is divided between reading "is fallen" once or twice. The Hebrew repeats the term. Repetition lends emphasis to the message. Babylon is a comprehensive term that John employs to describe all religious bodies and movements that have fallen away from the truth. This fact requires us to view this "fall" as progressive and cumulative.

This prophecy of the fall of Babylon finds its last-day fulfillment in the departure of Protestantism at large from the purity and simplicity of the gospel (see on Rev. 14:4). This message was first preached by the advent movement known as Millerism, in the summer of 1844, and was applied to the churches that rejected the first angel's message concerning the judgment (see on v. 7). The message will have increasing relevance as the end draws near, and will meet its complete fulfillment with the union of the various religious elements under the leadership of Satan (see on chs. 13:12–14; 17:12–14). The message of ch. 18:2–4 announces the complete downfall of Babylon and calls upon God's people who are scattered throughout the various religious bodies comprising Babylon, to separate from them.

That great city. The adjective "great" is applied to Babylon consistently throughout the book of Revelation (see chs. 16:19; 17:5, 18; 18:2, 10, 21).

All nations. The universal nature of the apostasy is here described. The substitution of human laws for the laws of God and the enforcement of religious decrees by the state will become universal (see on ch. 13:8; cf. 6T 18, 19, 395; 7T 141).

Drink. A figure describing the acceptance of the false teachings and policies of Babylon. Coercion is suggested in the phrase "made all nations drink." Religious elements will bring pressure to bear upon the state to enforce their decrees.

Wine of the wrath. The figure is probably borrowed from Jer. 25:15, where Jeremiah is bidden to "take the wine cup of this fury …, and cause all the nations … to drink it." But wrath is not Babylon's object in offering the wine to the various nations. She contends that drinking of her wine will bring peace to nations (see on Rev. 13:12). However, the drinking of it brings down on men the wrath of God.

Some suggest that the word here translated "wrath" (*thumos*) should be rendered "passion." The passage could then be translated, "she has caused all nations to drink the wine of her passionate immorality" (cf. RSV). However, elsewhere in the Revelation *thumos* seems to have the meaning "anger," "wrath," and that meaning should probably be adopted here also.

Fornication. A figure of the illicit connection between the church and the world or between the church and the state. The church should be married to her Lord, but when she seeks the support of the state, she leaves her lawful spouse. By her new connection she commits spiritual fornication. Compare on Eze. 16:15; James 4:4.

9. Third angel. Compare vs. 6, 8.

Followed. See on v. 8.

Loud voice. See on vs. 7, 8.

If any man. The Greek is equivalent to "he who."

Worship. Gr. *proskuneō* (see on v. 7).

The beast. That is, the beast described in ch. 13:1–10 (see comment there). The second beast solicits the worship of men for the first beast (see on ch. 13:12). It should be noted that this warning will have ultimate force only after the healing of the deadly wound (see on ch. 13:3), and the formation of the image to the beast (see on v. 14), when

the mark of the beast becomes an issue (see on v. 16). As preached today, the third angel's message is a warning concerning issues to come, a warning that will enlighten men as to the issues involved in the developing struggle and enable them to make an intelligent choice.

And his image. See on ch. 13:14. The conjunction "and" identifies the worshipers of the beast with those of the image. A further conjunction identifies these worshipers with those who receive the mark. The beast and the image are united in their aims and policies and in their demand that men receive the mark of the beast. Hence, one who worships the beast also worships the image and is a bearer of the mark.

Mark. See on ch. 13:16.

10. Wine of the wrath. That is, wine, which is the wrath. Men who drink of the wine of the wrath of Babylon's fornication (v. 8) will drink of the wine of the wrath of God. The warning is clear and plain. None need misunderstand.

Poured out. Literally, "mixed." The clause reads literally, "which is mixed unmixed." The potion is prepared without the usual addition of water. Compare this verse with Ps. 75:8, where the wine is apparently mixed with spices to increase its intoxicating power.

Cup of his indignation. Or, "cup of his wrath."

Shall be tormented. Gr. *basanizō*, "to torture," "to torment," "to distress." Compare the use of *basanizō* in Matt. 8:6, 29; 14:24 (translated "tossed"); 2 Peter 2:8. The seven last plagues fall upon the worshipers of the beast and his image (Rev. 16:2). In addition, these devotees of the beast rise in the second resurrection and receive their punishment (ch. 20:5, 11–15). It is not clear to which phase of punishment the revelator here refers. Perhaps it is to both. In both there will be torment. The first will end in death when Jesus appears from heaven (see on ch. 19:19–21), the second in eternal death (see on ch. 20:14).

Fire and brimstone. The figure is apparently drawn from Isa. 34:9, 10 (see comment there). Compare Gen. 19:24, where fire and brimstone are mentioned in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The presence. Both the plagues and the destruction of the wicked after the millennium will take place upon this earth. However, in the latter case the camp of the saints will be upon the earth. Christ will be with His people, and doubtless many angels will be there.

11. For ever and ever. Gr. *eis aiōnas aiōnōn*, literally, "unto ages of ages." This expression may be compared with the phrase *eis ton aiōna*, literally, "unto the age," generally translated "for ever" (see Matt. 21:19; Mark 3:29; Luke 1:55; etc.), or the phrase *eis tous aiōnas*, literally, "unto the ages," also generally translated "for ever" (Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 11:36), or the adjective *aiōnios*, literally, "age-lasting," generally translated "eternal," or "everlasting" (Matt. 18:8; 19:16, 29; 25:41, 46; etc.). Like *aiōnios* (see on Matt. 25:41), expressions *eis ton aiōna* and *eis tous aiōnas* do not necessarily denote endless existence. But, it may be asked, Do not these expressions at times denote perpetuity? If so, should not the compound expression *eis aiōnas aiōnōn*, "unto ages of ages," be regarded a more emphatic declaration of perpetuity?

This compound expression occurs elsewhere as *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*, literally, "unto the ages of the ages," and in every case is connected with God or Christ, and so expresses endless existence. However, this meaning is derived, not from the expression itself, but from that with which it is associated. The expression itself means multiplied ages.

The following is a possible explanation of the use of the compound expression here. The subject matter is the torment of the worshipers of the beast in an inferno of fire and brimstone. The age of a man in such an environment would be very brief, so that if the expression *eis ton aiōna*, "unto the age," had been used, it would be possible to conclude that the punishment would be but momentary. The compound expression shows that the torment would be for a certain period, not unending of course, as is evident from other scriptures that show that the final fate of the wicked will be annihilation (see Matt. 10:28; Rev. 20:14).

The figure of the smoke ascending forever is doubtless drawn from Isa. 34:10, where the desolation of Edom is described. That the ancient prophet did not envision unending fires is seen from the fact that following the conflagration, concerning which he says, "The smoke thereof shall go up for ever," the country becomes a desolate waste inhabited by wild beasts (vs. 10–15). The figure denotes complete destruction. See on Mal. 4:1.

Rest. Gr. *anapausis*, "cessation," "rest," "refreshment." The meaning here is that for the duration of the punishment, which continues until death ensues, there will be no relaxation of the punishment.

Day nor night. That is, daytime, or night-time. The time of day matters not; the torment is continuous.

Worship the beast. The classification is repeated (cf. v. 9), doubtless for emphasis. The third angel utters a most fearful threat. The inhabitants of earth will be without excuse if they do not escape the entanglement here warned against. They should put forth every effort to discover the identity of the beast, his image, and mark, and to become acquainted with his wiles and policies.

12. Patience. Gr. *hupomonē* (see on Rom. 5:3). Here the translation "steadfast endurance" would be a more suitable rendering. The context calls attention to the fearful struggle with the beast and his image. Every attempt will be made to force the remnant to join the movement promoted by the second beast, including the threat of boycott and death (Rev. 13:11–17). At the same time Satan will work with all "deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10; cf. Matt. 24:24), making it appear that the power of God is manifest in the movement. Through all this the faithful remnant steadfastly endure and maintain their integrity. Their steadfastness merits special commendation.

Saints. Gr. *hagioi*, literally, "holy ones" (see on Rom. 1:7).

Keep the commandments of God. This statement is particularly significant in its context. Led captive by Satan's delusions, the world will bow to the beast and its image, and carry out its dictates and decrees (see on ch. 13:8). The saints, on the other hand, refuse to comply with its demands. They keep the commandments of God. The special point controverted will be the fourth of the Ten Commandments. There is general agreement among Christians that the other nine are of universal obligation, but early in the Christian Era men began to set aside the seventh-day Sabbath and to substitute the

observance of the first day of the week as the day of worship (see on Dan. 7:25). Sunday-observing Christians today set forth various reasons as to why they observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh, and as to why they feel free to ignore the original Sabbath. Some say that the Decalogue was abolished along with all OT laws; others that the time element in the fourth commandment is ceremonial but the observance of one day every seven is a moral obligation. In the Roman Church the claim was long made that the church had, by its divine authority, transferred the sacredness of the day. However, in recent decades attempts have been made to invoke the authority of Christ and the apostles. Since all those views are unsupported by Scripture, they are unacceptable to all for whom the Bible and the Bible only is the rule of faith. The crisis will come when symbolic Babylon prevails upon the state to enforce Sunday observance by civil law and seeks to punish all dissenters. This is the issue described in Rev. 13:12–17 (see comment there, especially on vs. 12, 16). In this dark hour those who cling to the Bible will refuse to give up the observance of the true Sabbath. Among the identifying features of the faithful ones that might have been mentioned, the prophecy points out two predominant marks: the keeping of the commandments of God and of the faith of Jesus.

Faith of Jesus. Or, "faith in Jesus." The Greek may be understood either way, though the latter meaning is generally preferred. For the difference in meaning between the two expressions and for the importance of faith to Christian experience see on Rom. 3:22. The faith of Jesus and the keeping of the commandments represent two important aspects of Christian living. The commandments of God are a transcript of the character of God. They set forth the divine standard of righteousness that God would have man attain but which in his unregenerate state he cannot attain to. "The carnal mind … is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Despite his best attempts, man continually comes short of the glory of God (see on Rom. 3:23). But Jesus came to enable men to be restored to the divine image. He came to show men what the Father is like, and in this sense amplified the moral law. Through His power men are enabled to keep the divine requirements (see on Rom. 8:3, 4) and thus reflect the divine image.

The remnant church thus honors the commandments of God, and observes them, not in any legalistic sense but as a revelation of the character of God and of Christ, who dwells in the heart of the true believer (Gal. 2:20).

13. Voice. The voice is not identified, but is apparently distinguished from the voice of the third angel (vs. 9–12).

Write. See on ch. 1:11.

Blessed are the dead. This is one of the seven so-called beatitudes of the book of Revelation (cf. on Matt. 5:3). The others are found in Rev. 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

In the Lord. Not the dead generally are here pronounced blessed, but only those who die "in the Lord." These are they who died with their faith fixed in Jesus (cf. on 1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thess. 4:16).

From henceforth. This doubtless refers to the period of the three angels' messages, which embraces the period of persecution by the beast and its image, when the boycott is imposed and the death penalty passed (see on ch. 13:12–17). Those who go to their graves in this period rest, as it were, a little moment until the indignation be overpast. Then they will be privileged to come forth in the special resurrection preceding the general resurrection of the righteous (see on Dan. 12:2).

The Spirit. See on ch. 1:4.

Labours. Gr. *kopoi*, "wearying toil," "weariness," "strenuous effort." Compare the use of the word in 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23, 27; 1 Thess. 1:3. Death is a rest from the wearying toil of life.

Works. Gr. *erga*, "activities," a general term here contrasted with *kopoi* (see above).

Follow them. This expression has been interpreted in two ways: (1) On the basis that the Greek reads, literally, "follow with them," that is, accompany them, some consider that John here refers to the laying down of the burdens of this life and the continuation of activities in the future world. Activity would, of course, cease during the period between death and the resurrection, for that is a time of unconsciousness and inactivity (see on Ps. 146:4; 2 Cor. 5:1–3). But heaven will be a place of pleasurable activity (see Ed 301–309). (2) Others interpret the clause "their works do follow them" as referring to the influence a good man leaves behind when he dies.

14. A white cloud. Verses 14–20 are a symbolic vision of the coming of Christ. Rules for the interpretation of symbolic visions (see on Eze. 1:10) must be applied in an exposition of the passage. For the significance of clouds with reference to the coming of Christ see on Acts 1:9–11; cf. Matt. 24:30; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7. The nature of the three angels' messages and the fact that immediately following them the coming of Christ is discussed, show that the three messages are God's final message of warning to the world (cf. on ch. 18:1–4).

Son of man. See on ch. 1:13.

Crown. Gr. *stephanos*, "a wreath," "a crown," here, of victory (cf. on ch. 12:3). The golden crown may be contrasted with the "crown [*stephanos*] of thorns" (Matt. 27:29).

Sharp sickle. Jesus is represented coming as a reaper to gather the harvest (vs. 15, 16).

15. Another angel. That is, in addition to the three who delivered the messages of warning before the second advent of Christ (vs. 6, 8, 9).

Temple. Gr. *naos* (see on ch. 3:12). The temple has earlier been introduced into the prophetic picture (see ch. 11:1, 2, 19). It will be noticed that John frequently alludes to items introduced in earlier visions. The setting remains largely the same. For example, the four "beasts" introduced in ch. 4:6 appear repeatedly in subsequent visions (see chs. 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4).

The harvest. Verses 15–20 describe the great harvest at the end of all things. The harvest comprehends two distinctive events. One is described in vs. 16, 17, and the other in vs. 18–20. The first refers to the gathering of the righteous, represented here by ripened grain, as shown in the Greek by the word translated "ripe." The second refers to the wicked, represented by the clusters of "fully ripe" grapes.

Is ripe. Gr. *xēraino*, "to become dry," "to become withered," used of the ripening of grain crops.

16. Was reaped. This represents the gathering of the righteous (cf. Matt. 13:30; Luke 3:17).

17. Another angel. Compare v. 15.

Temple. See on v. 15.

Sickle. Compare v. 15.

18. Altar. Probably the altar mentioned in chs. 8:3, 5; 9:13.

Power over fire. The reason for mentioning that this angel has power over fire is not clear. Perhaps fire is a symbol of vengeance. Compare the phrase "angel of the waters" (ch. 16:5).

Cried. Compare v. 15.

Clusters of the vine. The figure of the two harvests is borrowed from the ancient Palestinian agricultural year, which consisted of two main harvests, the grain harvest and the vintage (see Vol. II, pp. 109, 110). Here the vintage represents the wicked gathered for destruction.

19. Winepress. The figure is suitable with reference to the color of the wine, which resembles blood. The figure is probably drawn from Isa. 63:1–6 (see comment there).

Wrath of God. The reference here is, perhaps, particularly to the seven last plagues (ch. 15:1).

20. Trodden. The wine press in days of old was trodden by the feet of men (see on Isa. 63:2, 3).

Without the city. The picture is probably drawn from OT prophecies describing the destruction of God's enemies outside Jerusalem (see on Joel 3:12, 13).

Horse bridles. A figure of speech indicating the great and complete slaughter of the wicked hosts. A parallel figure is found in the apocryphal book of Enoch: "And in those days in one place the fathers together with their sons shall be smitten And brothers one with another shall fall in death Till the streams flow with their blood. … And the horse shall walk up to the breast in the blood of sinners, And the chariot shall be submerged to its height" (ch. 100:1–3; R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* vol. 2, p. 271).

Furlongs. Sixteen hundred furlongs would be about 184 mi. (see Vol. V, p. 50). No satisfactory explanation can be found for the particular number (1,600). Jerome thought it to be an allusion to the length of Palestine. This, however, is speculation, and adds little to the understanding of the passage. The main thought is that the enemies of the church of God are to be completely and finally overthrown. Therefore the church can look forward to full and complete deliverance from all her enemies, and to joyful triumph in the kingdom of God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 590; EW 15, 19, 31, 37, 40; LS 65, 117; PK 591; 1T 59, 69, 5T 475, 752
1–3GC 648
2–5AA 591; GC 649
3 GC 649
3–5PK 591; 5T 476
4 COL 223; ML 362; TM 149, 422; 8T 331
4, 5 EW 30
5 GC xi; GW 80; MB 69; PK 252; 1T 216, 705; 3T 266; 5T 482
6 COL 228; DA 633; GC 450, 453, 611; GW 470; MM 131, 330; 6T 434; 7T 51
6, 7 COL 227; GC 311, 355; PK 299; 1T 53; 8T 26
6–107T 140; 8T 94
6–12Ev 19, 20; GC 390; GW 470; 5T 455; 6T 17, 60, 133, 406; 8T 197
6–14COL 79
7 EW 232, 233, 240; GC 352, 368, 369, 379, 424, 435, 438; PK 714; SR 356, 359

7, 8 EW 241
7–10PK 187
8 EW 237, 247, 273; GC 381, 388, 389, 390, 536, 603; LS 59; PK 715; PP 124; SR 364; TM 61; 1T 53
9 FE 113; SR 383; 1T 207
9, 10 CS 51; EW 65; GC 438, 445, 604, 627; SR 381; 1T 223
9–11GC 594; TM 132
9–12CH 452; CT 548; CW 140; Ev 233; EW 75, 279; LS 96; TM 89; 1T 78, 337; 5T 383; 6T 31, 128, 229, 401; 8T 116, 118, 159; 9T 16
10 5T 212, 524
12 CM 122, 145; CW 30, 144; Ev 281, 581; EW 35, 254, 279; FE 479; GC 436, 445; LS 103; ML 73; MM 94, 98, 164; PK 300; RC 66; SR 381, 383, 401; TM 133, 219; 2T 450; 3T 446; 5T 206, 472, 501, 525; 6T 61, 144, 290, 292, 395, 434; 7T 150; 8T 41, 77, 153, 197; 9T 15, 61
12–196T 15
13 CH 375; MH 230; 5T 313
14 DA 633; EW 15, 35, 286; LS 65, 103; SR 410
14, 15 1T 60, 183
14–17EW 31
15 GC 311

CHAPTER 15

[5]

1 *The seven angels, with the seven last plagues*. 3 *The song of them that overcome the beast*. 7 *The seven vials full of the wrath of God*.

1. Another. That is, with reference to the sign mentioned in ch. 12:1.

Sign. Gr. *sēmeion* (see on ch. 12:1).

Great and marvellous With reference to its far-reaching effects.

Seven angels. For the use of the number "seven" in Revelation see on ch. 1:11.

Seven last plagues. Literally, "seven plagues, the last." These plagues are outlined in ch. 16. They are the last with respect to their kind; there will be no more plagues as such, although the ultimate destruction of Satan and sinners is still future (ch. 20:11–15).

Filled up. Gr. *teleō*, "to finish," "to execute," "to perform," "to accomplish." The special punishment reserved for the worshipers of the beast and his image (ch. 16:2) is summed up in the seven last plagues (see on ch. 14:10).

Wrath of God. See on ch. 14:10.

2. Sea of glass. See on ch. 4:6.

Mingled with fire. In ch. 4 the sea of glass is likened "unto crystal" (v. 6). Here it has a hue like fire doubtless through a reflection of the glory of God.

Had gotten the victory. These are the people who responded to, and accepted, the message of warning mentioned in ch. 14. They have been saved out of the world of trouble and evil, and are now secure in the kingdom of God. The victory was obtained by

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[5]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 13:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

the blood of the Lamb (ch. 12:11). They stood loyal to God even when the death penalty was pronounced (see on ch. 13:15). Now they stand safe on the sea of glass. The victory is complete, the struggle is over. They overcame, they triumphed, and now in the heavenly kingdom they sing the anthem of victory.

Beast. See on ch. 13:2.

Image. See on ch. 13:14.

Mark. See on ch. 13:16.

Number of his name. See on ch. 13:18.

Harps of God. See on chs. 5:8; 14:2. Verses 2–4 are parenthetical. Preceding a description of the fearful seven last plagues, the prophet is given a view of the triumph of the church of God over all her enemies. The saints will not be swallowed up in the overflowing scourge, but will be delivered.

3. Song of Moses. This is undoubtedly a reference to the song of deliverance after Israel crossed the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1–21). That song celebrated the deliverance from Egyptian oppression; the new song, deliverance from the tyranny of "Babylon the great" (Rev. 17:5).

Servant of God. Compare Joshua 14:7, where Moses is designated "the servant of the Lord," and Ex. 14:31, where he is called "his [the Lord's] servant."

Of the Lamb. The deliverance of the saints was wrought by Christ, the Lamb of God (see on ch. 17:14), and it is but natural that He should be adored and exalted in the song of deliverance.

Great and marvellous. There are many allusions to OT phraseology in this song. The marvelous works of God are extolled in Ps. 139:14; cf. Ps. 111:2, 4. There may be a specific reference here to the "works" of God in the seven last plagues. The "sign" delineating these plagues is described as "great and marvellous" (Rev. 15:1).

Lord God Almighty. See on ch. 1:8.

Just and true. Or, "righteous and genuine." Compare Deut. 32:4 (LXX); Ps. 145:17; Rev. 16:7; 19:2; GC 671.

King of saints. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between the reading "King of nations" and "King of ages." The reading "King of saints" has little support. In Jer. 10:7 the Lord is called "King of nations." This reading fits the thought of Rev. 15:4, where the prediction is made that all nations shall come and worship before God.

4. Who shall not fear thee? Compare Jer. 10:7. The message of the first angel in Rev. 14 was, "Fear God, and give glory to him." The saints had heeded this appeal, and now that their pilgrimage is over they join in this wonderful ascription of praise to the glory of God. Compare the cry of the worshipers of the beast, "Who is like unto the beast?" (ch. 13:4).

Glorify thy name. Compare Ps. 86:9.

Holy. Gr. *hosios* (see on Acts 2:27; cf. on ch. 13:34). The adjective appears with reference to God in the LXX of Deut. 32:4.. This is the first of three reasons given why men should glorify their Maker. The other two are, "for all nations shall come and worship before thee," and "for thy judgments are made manifest."

Thy judgments. Here, doubtless, particularly the judgments of God against the beast, his image, and his worshipers.

5. Temple. Gr. *naos* (see on ch. 14:15).

Tabernacle of the testimony. Or, "tent of the witness." This name apparently applies to the most holy place in Num. 17:7 (see comment there). In Acts 7:44 it seems to refer to the entire structure (cf. on Num. 9:15). Here the latter meaning probably applies. The wilderness tabernacle was a type of "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2).

6. Seven angels. See v. 1.

Linen. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "stone," which, however, creates an unusual and unlikely figure. White garments are the typical attire of celestial beings (Matt. 28:3; Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10; cf. Acts 10:30).

7. ***Four beasts.*** See on ch. 4:6–8.

Vials. Gr. *phialai*, "bowls," such as might be used for boiling liquids, for drinking, or for pouring out libations. In the LXX the word is used for a "basin" (Ex. 27:3) or a "bowl" (Num. 7:13).

8. Filled with smoke. Compare Ex. 40:34, 35; Isa. 6:4.

No man. Literally, "no one." This undoubtedly means that the time for intercession is past; no one can enter and have access to the mercy seat. The time of preparation is over; now the time has come for the pouring out of the unmingled wrath of God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 EW 16, 34, 286, 288; GC 648; LS 66; 1T 61; 5T 485; 9T 17
2, 3 AA 589, 590; GC 450; MB 31; PP 289; 5T 752
3 GC 669, 671; ML 346; PP 79; SR 426; TM 432; 8T 44
3, 4 DA 58; Ed 308; 7T 28
4 GC 670
8 EW 36; LS 117

CHAPTER 16

2 *The angels pour out their vials full of wrath*. 6 *The plagues that follow thereupon*. 15 *Christ cometh as a thief. Blessed are they that watch*.

1. I heard. See on ch. 1:2, 10.

A great voice. Compare ch. 1:10.

Out of the temple. In view of the fact that the seven plague-bearing angels had already departed from the temple (ch. 15:6), and that "no man [literally, "no one"] was able to enter into the temple" (see on v. 8), this would seem to be the voice of God Himself.

Seven angels. For the significance of the number "seven" in the Revelation see on ch. 1:11.

Go. Although John does not specify the moment for the giving of this fearful command, the context makes evident that it will be issued soon after the close of probationary time but prior to the coming of Christ (cf. on ch. 15:8). Obviously, the unprecedented series of calamities here foretold (see below on "pour out the vials") is yet future.

The fact that the first plague is poured out upon men who have received the mark of the beast and who worship its image (ch. 16:2) places the plagues after the setting up of the image and the affixing of the mark (see on ch. 13:14–17), and also after the proclamation of the third angel, which warns against the beast and its mark (see on ch. 14:9–11). Furthermore, the fact that the seven last plagues constitute the fullness of divine wrath untempered by mercy (chs. 14:10; 15:1; 16:1) clearly implies that the

probation of those upon whom they fall has closed (see on ch. 22:11). The fact that at the time of the fifth plague men are still suffering from the sores of the first plague (ch. 16:11) clearly implies that the plagues are poured out successively and within a comparatively short period of time (see on v. 2). It appears also that the judgment of mystical Babylon, which takes place under the seventh plague (v. 19), precedes that of the kings of the earth at the appearance of Christ (see on chs. 17:16; 18:11, 20; 19:2, 11–19; cf. chs. 6:15–17; 14:14).

Pour out the vials. That is, afflict the earth with the calamities figuratively represented by the seven bowls (see ch. 15:7). In certain respects the seven last plagues are similar to the ten plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 5:1 to 12:30). Both testify to the superior authority and power of God. Both result in the decisive defeat of men who had chosen to defy God, and thus in the deliverance of His chosen people from a situation that would otherwise be without remedy. Both demonstrate the justice of God and bring honor and glory to His name.

Each of the ten plagues upon Egypt was painfully literal; and each was designed to demonstrate how false were the claims of, and how futile was reliance upon, false religion (see on Ex. 7:17; Ex. 12:12; cf. PP 333, 758–760). Similarly, the seven last plagues will be literal, yet each will strike a telling blow at some aspect of apostate religion and thus have symbolic overtones. It is obvious, for instance, that the first angel did not pour a literal chemical compound from a literal bowl upon men who had received a literal mark inflicted by a literal beast. But the angel himself is probably literal, and the men upon whom his vial falls are certainly literal men, and their sufferings equally literal. The symbolic import of the third plague is clearly pointed out in Rev. 16:5, 6.

Wrath of God. See on 2 Kings 13:3 Rev. 14:10. It may be asked why God would torment men in the fearful manner described in ch. 16 *after* the close of human probation, when there will be no opportunity for repentance. Why does Christ not come and terminate the reign of sin immediately? In OT times various calamities, such as invasion, famine, pestilence, earthquake, and other natural disasters, were often permitted by God as remedial, disciplinary agencies to bring men to repentance (see Isa. 1:5–9; 9:13; 10:5, 6; 26:9; Jer. 2:30; 5:3; Hosea 7:10; Joel 1:4; 2:12–14; Amos 4:6–11; Haggai 1:5–11; see on 1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Chron. 18:18). Quite obviously the seven last plagues can serve no such beneficent purpose (see above on "go"). However, there can be no doubt that the plagues do serve a necessary function in the outworking of the plan of Heaven.

It may be observed that the first four or five plagues are, in a sense, of a preliminary nature and lead men to realize that they have been fighting against God (see GC 640). But instead of repenting they curse Him more bitterly than ever and become even more resolute in their opposition (see Rev. 16:9, 11, 21). The plagues thus serve to reveal the spirit of rebellion which fully controls their hearts. The tares, as it were, are proved to be tares (cf. Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43), and God's justice in destroying them is made evident (cf. GC 670). Conversely, the trials of the great time of trouble attending the plagues perfects the characters of the saints, and leads them to trust more confidently in God. Compare on Rev. 7:4.

As willingness to die for another is the supreme manifestation of love (John 15:13), so the intent to take another's life marks the ultimate degree of hatred. During the last two plagues a situation develops that makes this distinction fully apparent, even to the participants themselves, and the justice of God in terminating human history is thus made

evident to men as well as angles (see Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10; GC 638–640; cf. PP 260; cf. on Rev. 16:13, 14, 16, 17). It will then be demonstrated before the universe that, to a man, the remnant people would rather die than disobey God, and that those who have chosen the service of Satan would, if permitted, slay all who stand in the way of their purpose to control the earth. Caught in the very act of attempting to execute the death decree, they stand without excuse before God. See on ch. 16:17.

The line is thus clearly drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not, and through the unconverted the devil is permitted to demonstrate what the universe would be like should he be allowed to control it (see GC 37). Compare on ch. 7:1.

Upon the earth. That is, upon the inhabitants of earth.

2. The first. The numerical designation of each angel implies that the plagues are successive (see on vs. 1, 11).

Noisome and grievous. Or, "painful and severe," or "troublesome and annoying."

Sore. Gr. *helkos*, "ulcer," "sore," "suppurating wound." In the LXX *helkos* is used of the boils that befell the Egyptians (Ex. 9:9, 10,) of a "botch" that could not be healed (Deut. 28:27), and of the boils that came upon Job (Job 2:7). Against this "sore" the vaunted miracle-working power of the spirits now cooperating with apostate Christianity (Rev. 13:13–14; 18:2; 19:20) apparently proves unavailing (see on ch. 16:14). The falsity of the claims that men have based on miracle-working power is demonstrated in a way that they cannot deny (cf. Ex. 8:19).

The men. This first installment of "the wrath of God" (v. 1) falls upon those who have failed to heed either the third angel's message, which warned them against worshipping "the beast and his image" (ch. 14:9), or God's final call to come out of mystic Babylon (ch. 18:1–4). This plague will not be universal (see GC 628).

Mark of the beast. See on ch. 13:16.

Which worshipped his image. See on ch. 13:14, 15.

3. Upon the sea. Under the third plague the "rivers and fountains of waters" are similarly affected (v. 4). The sea is useful primarily as a highway for international commerce and travel. It has been suggested that, by the obstruction of international travel and trade (see chs. 13:13–17; 16:13, 14; 17:3, 12), this plague is designed to demonstrate in a signal way God's displeasure with respect to Satan's plan to bind the nations of earth together under his control. Compare Balaam's experience (Num. 22:21–35). Like the first plague, the second is not universal (see on Rev. 16:2; GC 628).

Blood. Doubtless in consistency, odor, and color, but not necessarily in composition.

Of a dead man. Nothing more offensive can be imagined than the coagulated blood of a dead man.

Every living soul. Or, "every living thing" RSV. The word for "soul" (*psuchē*) is used of animal life as well as of human life (see on Matt. 10:28; cf. on Ps. 16:10). In Rev. 8:9 *psuchē* is translated creatures, obviously referring to marine life. In Gen. 8:1 the Hebrew equivalent (*nephesh*, "living thing") is similarly used of animals (cf. Job 12:10).

4. Rivers and fountains of waters. In Bible times "rivers and fountains of waters" were primarily useful for such everyday requirements as drinking, bathing, and irrigation. Whereas the second plague would doubtless result in great inconvenience and perhaps interruption of travel (see on v. 3) the effects of the third would be immediate and

serious. Compare the first plague on the land of Egypt (see on Ex. 7:17, 19). Like the first and second plagues, the third is not universal (see GC 628).

5. I heard. See on ch. 1:2, 10.

Angel of the waters. That is, one having jurisdiction over the waters. Compare the angels of chs. 7:1 and 14:18, which have power over the "winds" and over "fire" respectively. Reference here may well be to the angel assigned to pour out the third plague upon the "rivers and fountains of waters."

Thou art righteous. The terrible nature of the third plague apparently calls forth a statement in defense of God for authorizing it. He is altogether just in this demonstration of His "wrath" (see on chs. 15:3, 4; 16:1).

Lord. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

Art, and wast. See on ch. 1:4.

Shalt be. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "O Holy One, or the Holy One." This expression occurs in every ancient Greek manuscript except one now known and in the Textus Receptus, on which the KJV was largely based. The reason for the reading of the KJV is not apparent. The changelessness of God stands forth in striking contrast with the devastating changes now taking place on earth.

Thus. Literally, these [things], that is, the first three plagues and possibly those that have not yet fallen.

6. They have shed. Literally, they have poured out. This doubtless includes the unshed blood of the living saints, who have been marked out for martyrdom (see on chs. 17:6; 18:20). By condemning the people of God to death the wicked have as truly incurred guilt for their blood as if it had already been shed (GC 628; cf. Matt. 23:35).

Saints and prophets. See on Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7; Rev. 18:20.

Thou hast given them. The plague is stated to be a direct act on the part of God (see on v. 1; cf. GC 36, 37).

They are worthy. The punishment is precisely appropriate to the crime. The wicked deserve the punishment now meted out to them; it is in no sense an arbitrary act on the part of God (see on v. 1).

7. I heard. See on ch. 1:2, 10.

Another. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word. The preferred reading, literally, is, I heard the altar say, probably meaning, however, not the altar but an angel who had been serving at it or standing by it (cf. ch. 14:18). The altar is doubtless not personified.

The altar. That is, the altar of incense. No mention is made of an altar of burnt offering in heaven (cf. chs. 8:3; 9:13; 14:18). For the function of the altar of incense in the ancient tabernacle service see on Ex. 30:1, 6.

Even so. Literally, yes.

Lord God Almighty. See on ch. 1:8.

True and righteous. Or, true and just (see chs. 1:5; 3:7; 6:10; 15:3). In visiting these terrible judgments upon those who have rejected divine mercy. God is true in the sense that He is true to His word—He is carrying out what He had promised to do (ch. 14:9–11; etc.). He is righteous, or just, in the sense that justice demands the meting out of punishment to those who have defied Heaven. See on ch. 16:1.

Judgments. That is, acts of judgment, meaning the plagues.

8. Upon the sun. According to the Greek the first three plagues are poured out into (*eis*) the earth, the sea, and the fountains and rivers of waters, respectively. The next three are poured out upon (*epi*) the sun, the beast's throne, and the river Euphrates, respectively. The seventh is poured out into (*eis*; however, textual evidence favors cf. p. 10) the reading upon [*epi*]) the air. What distinction, if any, Inspiration may have intended is not clear.

Power was given. Literally, it was given, or it was permitted.

Scorch men with fire. Or, burn men with fire. Normally, the sun warms and cheers men, and controls plant growth, climate, and many other natural processes necessary to the maintenance of life upon the earth. Now, it sends forth an excess of warmth and energy that tends to torment men and to destroy life. Though men doubtless suffer directly from this intense heat, its worst results are doubtless the most severe drought and famine the world has ever known (see GC 628). But the literal plague is accompanied by a famine for God's Word (cf. Amos 8:11, 12). Throughout the land there is a feverish but vain quest for a means of alleviating the suffering and want occasioned by the first four plagues and of averting further calamities (GC 629). It is not motivated by godly sorrow, but by sorrow of the world (see on 2 Cor. 7:9–11). The objective is to escape the misery occasioned by the plagues, not to enter into a genuine state of reconciliation with God. Accordingly, Satan convinces the inhabitants of the earth, not that they are sinners, but that they have erred in tolerating God's chosen people (see EW 34; see on Rev. 16:14). Like the three preceding plagues, this one is not universal (GC 628).

9. Blasphemed. Gr. *blasphemeō* (see on ch. 13:1). Here, to blaspheme God is to speak of Him in a derogatory fashion. Under the fourth plague men begin to blame Him for their misery and to realize, at last, that they are fighting against Him (see on ch. 16:1).

Name of God. That is, God Himself. The name stands for the person who bears it (see on Matt. 6:9; Acts 3:16).

Power over these plagues. They view the plagues as a demonstration of divine power (see on v. 1).

Repented not. Instead of acknowledging their guilt they proceed to lay the blame for their miserable plight upon those who have remained true and loyal to God (see EW 34; GC 624). In utter perversity they refuse to yield to His will, and demonstrate themselves to be what they really are—devoted servants to Satan (see on v. 1). The refusal to repent proves them to be altogether and unalterably opposed to God.

Give him glory. That is, acknowledge Him to be true and righteous (see on v. 7). Those suffering from the plagues refuse to admit themselves in the wrong and God in the right, even in the face of severe judgments that would lead honest contrite men to amend their ways (cf. Isa. 26:9, 10. Their hearts prove to be utterly hardened and unsusceptible to either divine mercy or severity see on Ex. 4:21; Eph. 4:30; Rev. 16:1).

10. Seat. Gr. *thronos*, throne (see on ch. 13:2). The seat of the beast is apparently his headquarters. The beast here represents primarily the papacy in its revived state, not so much in its religious aspect as in its assumed role of a world power dominant over other world powers (see on chs. 13:1, 2, 10; 17:3, 8, 9, 11).

His kingdom. Or, its kingdom. Except for the small remnant that still resists his supremacy Satan numbers the world as his subjects, and it is through the revived papacy

in particular that he seeks to secure undisputed control over the entire human race (see GC 571, 580, 656; 5T 472; 7T 182; see on chs. 16:13, 14; 17:8, 12; cf. ch. 19:19). It would therefore appear that for the duration of this plague the entire world is enveloped in a pall of darkness. Thus, while men grope unrepentantly for light in a spiritually dark world (see ch. 16:8, 9) God sends upon them literal darkness, symbolic of the deeper spiritual night that is yet to enshroud the earth (see on vs. 13, 14).

Darkness. The entire clause reads literally, his kingdom became darkened, the Greek implying that it remained so for a period of time. This is literal darkness (see on v. 1), with its attendant cold and misery. The absence of light and heat would be all the more impressive and painful after the intense heat experienced under the fourth plague.

Gnawed their tongues for pain. Or, "kept biting their tongues out of pain," that is, because of pain. Possibly an intense cold accompanied the prolonged darkness.

11. Blasphemed. Men confirm their perverse hatred of God. Their attitude under the fourth plague (see on v. 9) persists unabated.

God of heaven. See on ch. 11:13.

Their pains. That is, the effects of the plagues (v. 10).

Their sores. That is, the effects of the first plague (v. 2). Apparently the sores of the first plague are not immediately fatal, at least not in all cases. Apparently, also, the plagues fall successively rather than simultaneously, and their effects persist (see on v. 2).

Repented not. See on v. 9.

12. The sixth angel. Generally speaking, Adventist expositors have set forth one or the other of two interpretations of vs. 12–16. According to the first interpretation the "great river Euphrates" represents the Ottoman Empire; the drying up of its waters, the gradual dissolution of that empire; the kings of the east, the nations of the Orient; and Armageddon, the literal valley of Megiddo in northern Palestine. Thus, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire is seen as preparing the way for Oriental nations to join battle with those of the West in the valley of Megiddo.

According to the second interpretation the Euphrates represents the people over whom mystical Babylon holds sway; the drying up of its waters, the withdrawal of their support from Babylon; the kings of the east, Christ and those accompanying Him; and Armageddon, the last battle of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, fought out on the battlefield of this earth. Thus, the withdrawal of human support from mystical Babylon is seen as the removal of the last barrier to her ultimate defeat and punishment.

According to the first view the battle of Armageddon begins as essentially a political conflict and comes to a climax with the appearance of Christ and the armies of heaven. According to the second view the battle of Armageddon begins when the united religious and political powers of earth open their final attack on God's remnant people.

Though these two views appear to be mutually exclusive, they actually have much in common.

Proponents of both views on Armageddon are generally agreed on the following points:

1. That it is the last great battle of earth's history and that it is still future.
2. That it is the battle of that great day of God (v. 14).
3. That "the great river Euphrates" is symbolic of human beings.
4. That the three "unclean spirits" (v. 13) represent the papacy, apostate Protestantism, and spiritism (or paganism).

5. That these three spirits constitute the agencies that will summon the nations to battle.
6. That the gathering agencies—three unclean spirits—are religious in nature and that the forces gathered are political and military.
7. That preparations for the battle take place under the sixth plague, but that the battle itself is fought under the seventh plague.
8. That in one phase it will be a real battle between real people employing real weapons.
9. That there will be bloodshed on an unprecedented scale.
10. That all the nations of earth will be involved.
11. That eventually Christ and the armies of heaven intervene and bring the battle to a close.
12. That the living saints witness the battle, but not as direct participants.

The fundamental difference between the two views consists in whether the three terms, Euphrates, "kings of the east," and Armageddon, retain a measure of literal, geographical significance, or whether they are to be interpreted in a completely figurative sense. The first view assumes that these terms retain geographical significance. The second view affirms that they are to be interpreted altogether figuratively, in terms of the context of chs. 13 to 19. For further comment on the various points of similarity and difference between the two views see on vs. 12–19. Compare on Dan. 11:36–40.

As might be expected, variations and modifications of these two major views are held by some Adventist expositors. However, space limits prevent exploring these. For an earlier discussion of the view that the battle of Armageddon is the battle between Christ and the wicked nations at the second advent, see James White in *The Review and Herald,* Jan. 21, 1862, p. 61. For a formal presentation of the view that the battle of Armageddon involves also a political and military gathering of the nations of earth in Palestine, see Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (1944), pp. 691–701.

Great river Euphrates. See p. 724; see on ch. 9:14. Proponents of both the first and the second views agree that John does not here refer to the literal river as a river, or to the drying up of its literal waters. There is also general agreement that the waters of the river Euphrates here represent human beings (cf. ch. 17:15). According to the first view, however, the Euphrates represents the former Ottoman Empire, through which this river flowed, and since the fall of that empire at the end of World War I, its modern successor, Turkey. This view assumes that the term Euphrates, while not referring to the literal river as a river, nevertheless retains a measure of literal geographical significance, to the extent of being a designation for the geographical area traversed by the river, the Mesopotamian valley. For more than 1,000 years this area was administered by the Saracens and the Turks, and more recently by the government of Iraq.

According to the second view the significance of the term Euphrates is to be ascertained from the context which reveals that the term Babylon is used exclusively as a symbol of apostate Christianity (see on chs. 14:8; 17:5). Historically and geographically the literal river Euphrates was *the* river literal Babylon (Jer. 51:12, 13, 63, 64). As *the* river of mystical Babylon, that great city (see on Rev. 17:18), the Euphrates would here be dissociated altogether from its former literal, geographical significance and be understood in terms of its companion symbol, mystical Babylon. The waters of the Euphrates would thus be the "many waters" of ch. 17:1–3, 15 on which mystical Babylon sits, the "inhabitants of the earth," whom she makes "drunk with the wine of her fornication" (ch. 17:2; cf. ch. 13:3, 4, 7, 8, 14–16).

Water. See on ch. 17:1, 15.

Dried up. The form of the verb in the Greek denotes as an accomplished fact the act of drying up. According to the first view the drying up of the river Euphrates here referred to began to meet its fulfillment in the gradual shrinking of the Ottoman Empire, with the complete fulfillment of this prophetic feature still future.

According to the second view the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates refers to the withdrawal of human support from mystical Babylon in connection with the sixth plague (see above on "great river Euphrates"; see on Rev. 16:14, 16, 17, 19; cf. Isa. 44:26 to 45:2). Proponents of this view find the results of the drying up described symbolically in Rev. 16:18, 19; 17:15–18, and literally in GC 654–656.

Way. Gr. *hodos*, "road," "highway." In the setting of vs. 12–16 this is the way by which the kings and their armies pass through the Euphrates to join battle with their opponents. According to the first view this "way" would be geographically through the Mesopotamian valley, formerly the territory of the Ottoman Empire. According to the second view, way is figurative—the "way" by which the situation on earth is prepared for Christ and the armies of heaven to triumph over Babylon (v. 19) and "the kings of the earth" (v. 14).

Kings of the east. Literally, kings from the [sun] rising (see on ch. 7:2). In harmony with the geographical significance that they attribute to "the great river Euphrates," those who hold the first view understand the "kings of the east" in a geographical sense, as denoting nations situated to the east of the Mesopotamian valley.

According to the second view "the kings of the east" represent Christ and those accompanying Him. This view bases the term "kings of the east," like the other symbolic expressions of Rev. 16:12, on the historical incident of Cyrus conquering Babylon and later releasing God's people, the Jews, to return to their native land.

Prepared. According to the first view the way of the kings of the east began to be prepared by the shrinking of the Ottoman Empire (see above on "dried up"). According to the second view the "way" will be "prepared" by the withdrawal of human support from mystical Babylon (see on vs. 1, 12, 14, 17). According to the first view this preparation is of a geographic and military character; according to the second, it is of a moral and spiritual character.

13. I saw. See on ch. 1:1.

Three unclean spirits. Proponents of both views agree on identifying the "ydragon," "beast," and false prophet as modern spiritism (GC 561, 562), or paganism, the papacy, and apostate Protestantism (cf. chs. 13:4, 14, 15; 19:20; 20:10). The three unclean spirits apparently either symbolize or represent this evil trio of religious powers, which together constitute latter-day "great Babylon" (ch. 16:13, 14, 18, 19; see on chs. 16:19; 17:5).

Like frogs. Perhaps no significance should be attached to this comparison, which probably is intended only to highlight the repulsiveness of the three unclean spirits in the sight of God.

Out of the mouth. The mouth is the instrument of speech. Coming forth from the mouth of the "dragon," of the "beast," and of the false prophet, these three unclean spirits represent the policy that this threefold religious union proclaims to the world, spoken of in ch. 17:2 as the wine of Babylon (see on chs. 16:14; 17:2, 6).

Dragon. See on chs. 12:3; 13:1. The first member of this threefold religious union is generally identified either as spiritism or as paganism. Indeed, many pagans worship

spirits and practice various forms of spiritism more or less resembling modern spiritism as practiced in Christian lands.

Beast. See on chs. 13:1; 17:3, 8.

False prophet. Apparently to be identified with the second beast of ch. 13:11–17 (see on v. 11), which sponsors the first beast of v. 1–10, and by the miracles he has power to do in presence of the beast (v. 12–14), deceives men into making an "image" to it. Compare chs. 19:20; 20:10.

14. Spirits of devils. Literally, "spirits of demons," or "demonic spirits." In the Gospels the term "unclean spirit" is used interchangeably with "devil" (see Mark 1:27, 34; 3:11, 15; 6:7; etc.). See Rev. 18:2; cf. 5T 472, 473.

Working miracles. Or, "performing signs [*sēmeia*]," that is, miracles from the viewpoint of their value as authenticating the claims, or attesting the power and authority, of the person performing them (see Vol. V, p. 208). These miracles are also referred to in chs. 13:13, 14; 19:20. Supernatural manifestations of various kinds constitute the means by which Satan, working through various human agencies, succeeds in uniting the world behind his purpose to obliterate those who constitute the only barrier to his unchallenged dominion over mankind.

Kings of the earth. Textual evidence attest (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "of the earth and." The "kings" are the political powers of earth, in contrast with the threefold religious union of v. 13 (see comment there), which summon the nations of earth to unite in a crusade to destroy God's people (9T 16; GC 562, 624). This universal religio-political combine (see on ch. 17:3) aspires to rule the world. According to the first view these "kings" represent the nations of the West, in contrast with the "kings of the east" (ch. 16:12), the nations of the Orient. According to the second view the expression "kings of the earth and of the whole world" includes the nations of both East and West (see on v. 12). For further information concerning the identity of the "kings of the earth" and the temporary success of this plot see ch. 17:2, 12, 14; see on v. 12; cf. 7T 182.

To gather. According to the first view this gathering consists of political and military preparations on the part of "the kings of the earth and of the whole world." According to the second view it refers to efforts put forth by the threefold religious union to secure united action on the part of the political powers of earth for the purpose of waging war on the remnant of God's people.

The battle. Proponents of both views agree that different aspects of the same battle are described in chs. 14:14–20; 16:12–19; 17:14–17; 19:11–21; cf. 6T 406. According to the first view this is primarily a politico-military battle to be fought in the literal valley of Megiddo between the nations of East and West (see on ch. 16:12, 13). According to the second view this battle is one in which the nations unite to destroy the people of God, and is therefore primarily a religious conflict.

That great day. That is, the day of God's wrath (see on v. 1). Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "the great day." See on Isa. 2:12.

God Almighty. See on ch. 1:8.

15. Behold. Or, "See"

I come as a thief. That is, to the ungodly (see on 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3:10; cf. Matt. 24:43; Luke 21:35).

Blessed. Or, "happy" (see on Matt. 5:3).

He that watcheth. See on Matt. 24:42. The saints are to be alert and vigilant, lest they be deceived (see above on "I come as a thief").

Keepeth his garments. That is, remains steadfast in faith and character and wholly loyal to God. See on Matt. 22:11.

Lest he walk naked. That is, lose his garment of character as a result of yielding his faith. Compare ch. 17:16.

They. Probably meaning people generally.

See his shame. That is, see that he has surrendered his faith. Even though destiny has been fixed at the close of probation (see on ch. 22:11), God's people must not relax their vigilance. Rather, they must become increasingly alert as Satan intensifies his deceptions.

16. He gathered. Or, "they gathered." The Greek may be translated either way. The pronoun "they" would refer to the three unclean spirits of vs. 13, 14, and "he" to the angel of v. 12. The context favors the translation "they." For the gathering process see on v. 14.

Proponents of both views agree that the gathering takes place under the sixth plague, but that the battle itself is fought under the seventh (see Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 702; see on Rev. 16:12, 17).

Them. That is, the kings of the earth of v. 14.

Together. According to the first view the military forces of earth are gathered together in the literal valley of Megiddo, in northern Palestine (see on vs. 12, 14). According to the second view the kings of the earth are united in mind and purpose (see on ch. 17:13, 17). Compare Ps. 83:4, 5.

Place. Gr. *topos*, "place," which is used variously of a geographical location, a "place" in a book, status, or, figuratively, "condition," or "situation," as in Acts 25:16 ("licence") and Heb. 12:17. According to the first view, which stresses geographical implications, this would refer to the valley of Megiddo, the plain of Esdraelon in northern Palestine (see on Rev. 16:12, 14). According to the second view, which stresses the figurative meaning of the various expressions of vs. 12–16 (see on v. 12), this would be the "condition," or frame of mind, into which the kings of the earth are gathered—the compact to annihilate the people of God (see on chs. 16:14; 17:13).

In the Hebrew tongue. Perhaps by this John intended to direct his readers to a study of Armageddon as a "Hebrew" term and to a review of Hebrew history, that the cryptic name might be understood.

Armageddon. Gr. *Harmageddōn*, a transliteration from the Hebrew, as John explains. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading *Harmageddōn*, but may also be cited for the readings *Armegedon*, *Armagedō*, *Mageddon*, and others. In view of the fact that no geographical location ever bore this name, so far as is known, the significance of the term is not readily apparent. Also, opinions differ as to what Hebrew word or words the Greek transliteration represents. The reading *Harmageddōn* is from two Hebrew words, the first of which may have been *'ir*, "city," though more probably *har*, "mountain." As noted, however, some ancient manuscripts omit the first syllable *ar–* or *har–* altogether.

For the second part of the name, *–mageddōn*, two different derivations have been suggested: (1) That *–mageddōn* is from the Heb. *megiddo* or *megiddon* (1 Kings 9:15;

Zech. 12:11), the ancient city of Megiddo, which gave its name to the important pass through the mountains to the southwest, to the valley of Jezreel to the north and northeast (2 Chron. 35:22), and to the Kishon (Judges 4:7, 13; 5:19, 21), which flows through the valley. (2) That *–mageddōn* is from *mo'ed*, the Hebrew word commonly used throughout the OT for "congregation" (Ex. 27:21; 28:43; 29:4, 10, 11, 30, 32; etc.), for an appointed "feast" (see on Lev. 23:2), and for an "assembly" and the "places of the assembly" (Lam. 1:15; 2:6). The first derivation links the composite name Armageddon with the geographical and historical environment of ancient Megiddo, while the second suggests a possible connection with the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

In Isa. 14:13, where *har–mo'ed* is translated "mount of the congregation," or "mount of assembly," and designates the mountain on which Solomon's Temple stood, to the north of ancient Jerusalem, Lucifer is represented as aspiring to replace God as Israel's sovereign ruler (see comment there). Compare "Tabernacle of the congregation" (Ex. 33:7; etc.).

Proponents of the first view of Armageddon consider the derivation to be from the Heb. *har–megiddo*, "mountain of Megiddo," and interpret the name as it is used in Rev. 16:16 in terms of the geographical environment and historical associations of the ancient city of Megiddo. Proponents of the second view understand the first derivation figuratively, that is, in terms of the historical events of OT history associated with the vicinity of ancient Megiddo (see Judges 4:4 to 5:31, especially ch. 5:31; chs. 6:33 to 7:25; 1 Kings 18:36–40; Ps. 83; cf. 2 Chron. 35:20–24), but without attributing geographical significance to the term Armageddon in Rev. 16:16 (see on v. 12). They understand the second derivation, *har–mo'ed*, figuratively also, on the basis of its use in Isa. 14:13, in terms of the great contest between Christ and Satan (see Rev. 12:7–9, 17; 17:14; 19:11–21).

17. Seventh angel. Concerning the significance of the number seven in the Revelation see on ch. 1:11.

Into the air. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "upon the air" (see on v. 8). The effect of this plague appears to be universal.

A great voice. Evidently, the voice of God. Compare ch. 1:10. See GC 635, 636; 1T 353, 354.

Temple of heaven. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading simply "temple" or "heaven."

From the throne. In other words, the statement constitutes an official proclamation from the Sovereign of the universe (see on ch. 4:2–5).

It is done. The same words are to be uttered a second time, at the re-creation of the new earth (ch. 21:6). Similar words—"It is finished"—were spoken by our Lord upon the cross (John 19:30) as He brought His ministry of sacrifice to a close, thereby assuring the success of the plan of redemption. In the context of Rev. 16:17 the dramatic announcement marks the moment when the revelation of the mystery of iniquity is complete, when the true character of the universal religio-political union of vs. 13, 14, 19, is unmasked (see comment there and on v. 1).

God permits the forces of evil to advance to the point of apparent success in their sinister design to eradicate the people of God. As the moment appointed in the death decree arrives (see on v. 14) and the wicked rush forward with shouts of triumph to

annihilate the saints (GC 631, 635; EW 283, 285), the voice of God is heard declaring, "It is done." This declaration terminates the time of Jacob's trouble (cf. on v. 15), delivers the saints, and ushers in the seventh plague (EW 36, 37, 282–285; GC 635, 636; 1T 353, 354).

18. Voices. Or, "sounds," "noises." Compare chs. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19. What the "voices" utter may be similar to the declaration of ch. 11:15 (cf. GC 640).

Thunders. Or, "peals of thunder."

Lightnings. Or, "flashes of lightning." Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) that this word precedes "voices, and thunders."

A great earthquake. A literal earthquake, as the remainder of v. 18 implies (see on v. 1; cf. vs. 20, 21), but accompanied by a figurative earthquake, which shatters mystical Babylon (v. 19). As a literal earthquake leaves a literal city in ruins, so a figurative earthquake brings ruin and desolation to "great Babylon" (see on chs. 17:16; 18:6–8, 21). The threefold union of vs. 13, 14 collapses (cf. Isa. 28:14–22).

Such as was not. Both literally and figuratively.

19. The great city. That is, mystical Babylon (see on chs. 17:5, 18; 18:10).

Divided into three parts. Mystical Babylon of the last days is composed of the papacy, apostate Protestantism, and modern spiritism (see on vs. 13, 14). At the voice of God (chs. 16:17; 17:17) this threefold union of apostate religious organizations loses its cohesion, unity, and power to act. Compare Hab. 3:3–16.

Cities of the nations. Continuing the figure of an earthquake shattering a literal city, John now refers to the political organizations of earth—represented in vs. 13, 14 as "the kings of the earth"—by a similar figure. For the appropriateness of a "city" to represent the apostate religious organizations of earth, and "cities" their political allies, see on chs. 11:8; 17:18.

Fell. The political forces of earth also lose the state of unity of purpose to which they were gathered under the sixth plague (see on vs. 14, 16; ch. 17:13, 17). There is a terrible awakening among them as God's voice delivers His waiting people from their foes (see GC 636, 637, 654). Now, the erstwhile components of the universal religio-political combine of ch. 16: 13, 14 begin to fight among themselves, and the "ten kings" of ch. 17:12–16 take revenge upon mystical Babylon (see on ch. 17:17). Filled with fury, the hosts of earth turn upon their leaders and upon one another the weapons with which they had purposed to slay the saints (see EW 290; GC 656). There is strife and bloodshed everywhere (see on ch. 14:20).

When Christ appears, the clash of arms and the tumult of earthly battle are stilled as the armies of heaven descend. "In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the inhabitants of the earth,—priests, rulers, and people, rich and poor, high and low" (GC 657). For a more complete account of this battle see on chs. 17:14; 19:11–21; cf. EW 282, 290; GC 656, 657. Compare the remarkably similar descriptions in Joshua 10:7–14; Judges 7:19–23; 1 Sam. 14:19, 20; 2 Chron. 20:22–24; Isa. 19:2; 34:8–10; 51:21–23; 63:1–6 Jer. 25:12–15, 29–38; Eze. 38:14–23; Haggai 2:22; Zech. 14:13.

Great Babylon. See on chs. 14:8; 17:1, 5.

Came in remembrance. See on ch. 18:5. This is a common Biblical expression denoting the arrival of the hour when divine judgment is to be meted out (Ps. 109:14; Eze. 21:23, 24; cf. Jer. 31:34).

To give unto her. Compare the words of the prophets concerning the literal city of Babylon (Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15, 16).

The cup. A common Biblical expression denoting suffering and judgments meted out (see Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22, 23; Jer. 25:15–17, 28; 49:12; Matt. 26:39). For the nature of the cup now given mystical Babylon to drink see on Rev. 17:16; 18:5–8; cf. on ch. 14:10.

Wine. See on ch. 14:10; cf. ch. 17:2.

Fierceness. Or, "fury" (see on v. 1).

His wrath. See on chs. 14:10; 16:1.

20. Every island. The convulsions of earth here described result from the earthquake of v. 18. Compare ch. 6:14.

The mountains. Compare ch. 6:14.

21. Great hail. Or, "great hailstones." For comment on the plague of hail on the land of Egypt see on Ex. 9:18–32. For hail as a weapon of divine retribution see Joshua 10:11; Eze. 13:11, 13, and as a divine judgment in the last great day of God's wrath see Isa. 28:17, 18; 30:30; Eze. 38:22; Rev. 11:19.

A talent. Variously estimated as weighing from about 58 to 80 lbs. (128 to 176 kg.; see "Talent," *SDA Bible Dictionary*).

Blasphemed God. For the third time those upon whom the plagues fall curse God, thus revealing their utter contempt for Him, even in the midst of His most grievous judgments (see on vs. 1, 9, 11).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 EW 64, 120, 124; TM 432; 5T 212
2 GC 445, 449
2–6 GC 628
5 TM 432
8, 9 GC 628
9–11 EW 282, 289
13, 14 EW 262; GC 561; 5T 451;
14 EW 87; GC 556, 624; ML 308
15 COL 319; DA 635
16 6T 406
17 FE 363; GC 613, 636; PP 509; 1T 184; 7T 235
18 GC 637; PP 110
19 FE 363
19–21 GC 637
20, 21 PP 110
21 PP 509

CHAPTER 17

3, 4 *A woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, with a golden cup in her hand, sitteth upon the beast,* 5 *which is great Babylon, the mother of all abominations*. 9 *The interpretation of the seven heads,* 12 *and the ten horns*. 14 *The victory of the Lamb*. 16 *The punishment of the whore*.

1. One of the seven angels. See on ch. 1:11; cf. ch. 21:9. The identification of this angel as one of the seven plague-bearing angels of chs. 15 and 16 implies that the information about to be imparted to John is related to the seven last plagues. This

relationship is confirmed by the fact that the announced topic of this chapter—"the judgment of the great whore"—takes place under the seventh plague (see ch. 16:19).

Vials. See on chs. 15:7; 16:1.

Talked with me. The Greek word translated "with" (*meta*) may be understood as implying an intimate relationship between John and the angel. Possibly the angel addressed John before taking him off in vision. See on ch. 1:2, 10.

Come hither. Or, "Here" The expression has the force of an imperative. See on v. 3.

I will shew unto thee. See on chs. 1:2; 4:1.

Judgment. Gr. *krima*, "sentence," "decision," "verdict," "decree," here of the heavenly assize with respect to "the great whore," in view of her criminal course of action (see on vs. 4–6; cf. on ch. 18:10). Note that the angel does not show John the execution of the sentence, or he would have used the word *krisis*, which word is translated "judgment" in ch. 18:10. He simply tells him of it. *Krisis* may indicate either the act of investigating a case or the act of carrying out the sentence. See on chs. 16:19; 18:5; 19:2; cf. Isa. 23:11.

Chapter 17 consists of two distinct parts: (1) the symbolic vision of vs. 3–6, which John saw, and (2) what he was told (v. 7) in explanation of it as recorded in vs. 8–18. Part one sets forth the crimes of Babylon, and thus constitutes Heaven's bill of indictment, a declaration of why the divine sentence is to be pronounced upon her (see on v. 6). Part two sets forth the sentence itself and the means by which it is to be executed. Babylon's criminal career reaches a climax under the sixth plague (see on ch. 16:12–16), whereas the sentence decreed is executed under the seventh (see on chs. 16:17–19; 17:13–17; 18:4, 8; 19:2). Accordingly, part one is concerned most particularly with events under the sixth plague, and part two with those under the seventh. Thus ch. 17 is a delineation of the final crisis, when Satan puts forth his supreme effort to annihilate God's people (cf. ch. 12:17) and when all the powers of earth are arrayed against them (cf. GC 634). God permits Satan and the human agencies allied with him to carry forward to the verge of success their plot to annihilate the saints. But at the moment the blow is to be struck God intervenes to deliver His people. The hosts of evil, arrested in the very act of attempting to slay the saints, stand without excuse before the bar of divine justice (see Dan. 12:1; cf. EW 282–285; GC 635, 636; LS 117). Little wonder that John was filled with amazement as he beheld the climax of the great drama of the mystery of iniquity (see on ch. 17:6).

Whore. Gr. *pornē*, "prostitute," "harlot." *Pornē* probably goes back to a word meaning "to sell" or "to export for sale" such things as slaves. In Greece prostitutes were usually purchased slaves. The OT prophets often compare apostate Israel, which repeatedly went "a whoring" after heathen gods (Eze. 23:30; cf. Isa. 23:17; see on Eze. 16:15), with an adulterous woman. Concerning mystical Babylon as a harlot see on Rev. 17:5 (cf. vs. 2, 4; ch. 19:2). For OT passages whose thought or wording is similar to that of Rev. 17 see on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1; Eze. 26:13.

Sitteth upon many waters. That is, exercises despotic power over many "peoples" and "nations" (see v. 15). The form of the verb in Greek presents the "great whore" as in power at the time and as continuing to exercise power. As the ancient city of Babylon was situated upon the literal waters of the Euphrates (see on Jer. 50:12, 38) and dwelt figuratively "upon many waters," or peoples (Jer. 51:12, 13; cf. Isa. 8:7, 8; 14:6; Jer.

50:23), so modern Babylon is represented as sitting upon, or oppressing, the peoples of earth (cf. on Rev. 16:12).

2. Kings of the earth. That is, the political powers of earth (see on v. 12), which place their authority and resources at the disposal of the "great whore" (v. 1; see on v. 13) and through which she designs to realize her ambition to slay all of God's people (see on vs. 6, 14) and to rule over the "inhabitants of the earth" (cf. v. 8). The "kings of the earth" are her accomplices in crime.

Committed fornication. Gr. *porneuō*, the related verb form of *pornē* (see on v. 1). This expression is equivalent to "gone a whoring" in the OT (cf. Eze. 23:30; Hosea 4:12). Used figuratively, as here, it refers to an illicit alliance of professed Christians with some master other than Christ, in this instance to a religio-political compact between an apostate church (see on Rev. 17:5) and the nations of earth. Compare Isa. 23:15, 17.

Inhabitants. As a result of the course followed by their leaders, the inhabitants of the earth are deceived (cf. on v. 8) into cooperating with the policy of the "great whore" (cf. ch. 13:8).

Made drunk. That is, completely intoxicated. The normal powers of reason and judgment have been stupefied and the spiritual perception benumbed. Compare Jer. 51:7; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; Rev. 13:3, 4, 7, 18; 14:8; 18:3; 19:20. It may be noted that here the intoxication of the inhabitants of earth is mentioned following reference to the illicit alliance between Babylon and the kings of the earth. Apparently Babylon acts through the kings of the earth to gain control of those inhabitants of earth who have not already voluntarily submitted to her. Rulers and subjects are alike deceived (GC 624).

With the wine. That is, by drinking the wine. This "wine" is Satan's deceptive policy of uniting all the world under his control, together with the falsehoods and "miracles" by which he advances his policy (cf. chs. 13:13, 14; 18:23; 19:20).

Of her fornication. Or, "[which is] her prostitution." The alliance between apostate Christianity and the political powers of earth is the means by which Satan proposes to unite the world under his leadership.

3. Carried me away. The sensation of motion was doubtless designed to aid John in making the mental transition from his own time and place to those of the vision (cf. Eze. 3:12–14; 8:3; 40:2, 3; Rev. 21:10).

In the spirit. Literally, "in spirit" (see on ch. 1:10; cf. chs. 4:2; 21:10). The absence of the definite article in Greek stresses the quality, or nature, of the experience.

The wilderness. Gr. *erēmos*, "a desolate place" (see on ch. 12:6). The related verb used in ch. 17:16 means "to desolate," "to lay waste," "to strip bare," "to abandon." A "wilderness" was an uninhabited region where life could be sustained only amid difficulty and danger. Food, shelter, and possibly even water would be difficult to obtain, and there would be danger from wild animals and perhaps from brigands. Accordingly, some consider that when used figuratively, as here, a "wilderness" would be a situation fraught with difficulty and danger, apparently for God's people (see vs. 6, 14). Absence of the definite article before the word "wilderness," in the Greek, clearly makes the term qualitative and descriptive. In other words, it specifies a condition rather than a particular location.

In view of the fact that ch. 17 appears to deal most particularly with the time of the seven last plagues (see on v. 1), some hold that the "wilderness" situation here referred to

is descriptive of the experience of God's people at that time. The situation here depicted is similar to, but not to be identified with, that of the "wilderness" of ch. 12:6, 13–16.

Woman. The OT prophets repeatedly represent an apostate people as a licentious woman (cf. Eze. 16:15–58; 23:2–21; Hosea 2:5; 3:1; etc.). This "woman"—the "great whore" (Rev. 17:1), or mystical "Babylon the great" (v. 5)—is guilty of "the blood … of all that were slain upon the earth" (ch. 18:24), apparently throughout history. Mystical Babylon constitutes the organized religious opposition to God's people, probably from the beginning of time, but here, particularly, at its very close (see on ch. 17:5).

Sit. The form of the verb denotes continuing action. In v. 1 the "great whore" is represented as being in direct control of men as individuals, religiously, and here as directing the policies of civil government (see on v. 18). It has ever been characteristic of apostate Christianity to attempt a union of church and state, in order to consolidate religious control over public policy (cf. Vol. IV, p. 837). Compare the declaration of our Lord that His "kingdom" is not "of this world" (John 18:36).

Scarlet. Or, "crimson," a brilliant color certain to attract attention. In Isa. 1:18 scarlet is the color of sin. Compare the "great red dragon" of Rev. 12:3.

Beast. In Bible prophecy beasts commonly represent political powers (Dan. 7:3–7, 17; 8:3, 5, 20, 21; cf. Rev. 12:3; 13:1). The color of this beast may intimate that it is the epitome of evil, as the names of blasphemy with which it is covered indicate that it stands in opposition to God. Accordingly, the beast itself may be identified as Satan working through those political agencies, in all ages, that have submitted to his control.

In certain respects this beast resembles the great red dragon of ch. 12:3, and in others the leopardlike beast of ch. 13:1, 2 (see respective comments.) The context makes the latter relationship appear to be closer. The chief difference between the beast of ch. 13 and that of ch. 17 is that in the former, which is identified with the papacy, no distinction is made between the religious and the political aspects of papal power, whereas in the latter the two are distinct—the beast representing political power and the woman, religious power.

Full. Apostasy and opposition to God are complete.

Names of blasphemy. Or, "blasphemous names" (see on Mark 2:7; 7:2). In Rev. 13:1 (see comment there) the names are on the seven heads; here, they are scattered over the entire beast. These names indicate the character of the beast—it presumes to usurp the prerogative of Deity. That it is "full" of blasphemous names indicates that it is wholly devoted to this objective. Compare Isa. 14:13, 14; Jer. 50:29, 31; Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 11:36, 37.

Seven heads. See on vs. 9–11. For seven-headed beasts in ancient mythology see on Isa. 27:1.

Ten horns. See on vs. 12–14, 17.

4. The woman. See on v. 3.

Purple and scarlet. Compare Eze. 27:7; Rev. 18:7, 12, 16, 17, 19. These were the colors of royalty (see on Matt. 27:28), to which this "woman" laid clam (cf. Rev. 18:7). Scarlet may also considered the color of sin and of a prostitute (see on ch. 17:3). This prostitute, this apostate religious organization, depicted in all her seductiveness, s gaudily dressed and vulgarly bedecked. She stands forth in striking contrast with "bride" of the Lamb, whom John saw arrayed in fine line, clean and white (see ch. 19:7, 8; cf. 1T 136; Ed 248). See on Luke 16:19.

Abominations and filthiness of her fornication. Or, "unclean acts, *even* the filthiness which is her fornication." The gold of the cup deceives men with respect to the nature of the contents. See on v. 2.

5. Forehead. The character reflected by the name "Babylon" is the woman's considered choice. This may be implied by the fact that the name appears on her forehead. Compare on ch. 13:16.

Was a name written. Rather, "a name stands written," that is, it had been written there in the past and remains there. The name reflects character.

Mystery. This word is descriptive of the title, not part of it; hence the appropriateness of the term "mystical Babylon" (see on ch. 1:20).

Babylon the great. Although, in one sense, mystical Babylon may be considered as representative of apostate religious systems throughout history, "Babylon the great" in the book of Revelation designates, in a special sense, the united apostate religions at the close of time (see on chs. 14:8; 16:13, 14; 18:24). In ch. 17:18 mystical Babylon is called "that great city" (cf. chs. 16:19; 18:18). Here, doubtless, Babylon is referred to as "great" in view of the fact that this chapter deals most particularly with Satan's great final effort to secure the allegiance of the human race through religion. "Babylon the great" is the name by which Inspiration refers to the great threefold religious union of the papacy, apostate Protestantism, and spiritism (see on ch. 16:13, 18, 19; cf. on chs. 14:8; 18:2; cf. GC 588; Dan. 4:30; Zech. 10:2, 3; 11:3–9). The term "Babylon" refers to the organizations themselves and to their leaders, not so much to the members as such. The latter are referred to as "many waters" (Rev. 17:1, 15) and as the "inhabitants of the earth" (v. 2; cf. v. 8).

Mother of harlots. As already noted, "Babylon the great" includes apostate Protestantism at the time here envisioned. The daughters of this "mother" thus represent the various religious bodies that constitute apostate Protestantism.

Abominations. See on v. 4.

6. Drunken. See on v. 2. Literally, "continuing in a state of intoxication." In a general sense Babylon may be said to be "drunken" with the blood of the martyrs of all ages (cf. ch. 18:24), but in a more immediate sense with that of martyrs and prospective martyrs in the closing scenes of earth's history. God holds Babylon accountable for the blood of those whose death she has decreed but whom she is prevented from slaying (see GC 628). Babylon is utterly intoxicated with her past success at persecuting the saints (see on Dan. 7:25; Matt. 24:21; cf. Rev. 6:9–11; 18:24), and with the prospect that soon she will have the satisfaction of completing the gory task (see on chs. 16:6; 17:14; cf. GC 628).

Blood. See on ch. 16:6.

Saints. Literally, "holy ones" (see on Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7).

And with the blood. Or, "that is, with the blood."

Martyrs. Gr. *martures*, literally, "witnesses" (see on ch. 2:13). Compare Isa. 47:6; Jer. 51:49; see on Rev. 18:24.

Of Jesus. Meaning, probably, "who bore witness concerning Jesus," first by their words and then by their martyrdom. They had been slain because they persisted in witnessing for Jesus and His truth, and had been loyal to His name at the cost of their lives.

When I saw her. It is not clear whether this refers to all that John had seen in vs. 3–6, or only to her conduct in v. 6, the climax of her criminal career. The angel's reply to John's amazement (v. 7) may imply the former.

I wondered with great admiration. Literally, "I was amazed with great amazement," the Greek being a reflection of a typically Hebrew idiomatic expression. The angel had called John to witness the sentence to be pronounced on Babylon, the religious prostitute (v. 1), and the apostle probably expected to see a picture of complete ruin and degradation. But, instead, he sees a woman garbed in costly and gorgeous attire, in a state of intoxication, and sitting upon a fearsome beast. An angel had already told John something about this evil "woman" (see chs. 14:8; 16:18, 19), but now he is given a more complete and startling account of her crimes. What John sees fills him with utter astonishment, far beyond anything he express elsewhere in the Revelation.

The crimes of mystical Babylon, as set forth in the angel's indictment, may be enumerated as follows (cf. on ch. 18:4):

1. *Seduction*. By seducing the kings of the earth into illicit union with her, in order to further her own sinister designs (see on v. 2; ch. 18:3).
2. *Oppressive despotism.* By sitting upon "many waters"—oppressing the peoples of earth (see on ch. 17:1).
3. *Contributing to human delinquency.* By making the people of earth—except for the saints—drunk with the wine of her political policy, thus causing them to become her accomplices in her evil plot (see on v. 2). By her "fornication" she "did corrupt the earth" (ch. 19:2).
4. *Drunkenness.* By being "drunken with the blood of the saints," who had offended her by refusing to drink of her evil potion of error or to submit to her ambition to rule the earth.
5. *Murder and attempted murder.* By plotting the murder of Christ's bride, the "woman" of ch. 12 (see on chs. 17:6, 14; 18:24).

7. I will tell thee. In the Greek the pronoun is emphatic: "I myself will tell thee." The remainder of the chapter is the angel's interpretation of the "mystery," or the symbolism of the vision of vs. 3–6. The "beast" is explained in vs. 8–17, the "woman" in v. 18.

8. The beast that thou sawest. That is, the beast of v. 3. John was not shown the beast in either its "was" or its "is not" state, but in its revived state following the "is not" period. However, the angel briefly recounts the past career of this fearful creature by way of identifying the beast as John saw it (see on vs. 8–11).

In the introduction to the vision (vs. 1, 2) and in the vision itself (vs. 3–6) John's attention was directed almost exclusively to the woman, and the beast is mentioned almost incidentally. In the Greek of vs. 1–6, according to Nestle's text, 102 words are devoted to the woman and only 12 to the beast. But in the explanation (vs. 7–18) the angel dwells almost altogether on the beast, together with its heads and horns. In the Greek of vs. 7–18 only 36 words are devoted to the woman and 243 to the beast. This noteworthy difference between the vision and its explanation may suggest that although the announced topic of the vision is the divine sentence pronounced upon mystical Babylon, and although she proves to be the leading character in events depicted by the vision, her brief triumph and sudden fall can be understood only by a careful study of the contribution made by the beast, both to her momentary success and also to her eventual defeat.

Was, and is not. At some time in the past the beast had been active, but then disappeared. This expression is repeated at the close of v. 8 and again in v. 11. Some identify the "was" period of the beast with that of pagan Rome, the "is not" period with the brief interval between the end of pagan persecution and the beginning of papal persecution and the "yet is" period with that of papal Rome. Others equate the "was" period with that represented by the beast and its seven heads, the "is not" period with the interval between the wounding of the seventh head and the revival of the beast as "the eighth," and the "yet is" period with the revival of the beast when it becomes "the eighth." Those who hold the former view thus equate the "was" period of the beast with that of the dragon of ch. 12, whereas those who hold the latter view would include also the leopardlike beast of ch. 13. The present tense, "is not," stresses time sequence.

Shall ascend. Or, "is about to ascend." The angel still speaks of the career of the beast prior to its rising from the "bottomless pit." At the time John saw this beast in vision it had already ascended "out of the bottomless pit."

When the expression "was, and is not" is repeated at the close of v. 8, the words "yet is"—preferably, "is to be"—appear in place of the words "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit," used earlier in the verse (see below on "yet is"). Accordingly, the beast "yet is" when it ascends "out of the bottomless pit." The comparable words in this threefold sequence as given in v. 11 are, "even he is the eighth." Therefore, when the beast ascends "out of the bottomless pit" and "yet is," it exists as "the eighth," literally, "an eighth." In v. 8 the beast goes "into perdition" after ascending out of "the bottomless pit" and existing for an unspecified period of time as "the eighth."

When the beast exists again as "the eighth," "they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast." A remarkably similar statement is made in ch. 13:3, 8 (cf. v. 4), of the world's attitude toward the beast of that chapter when its deadly wound is healed: "All the world wondered after the beast. … And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." If ch. 13 here refers to the same event as ch. 17:8, it follows that the statement "his deadly wound was healed" (ch. 13:3) is equivalent to the expression "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (ch. 17:8; cf. ch. 20:3, 7). Similarly, the words "did live" (ch. 13:14) would then be equivalent to the expressions "yet is" and "he is the eight" (ch. 17:8, 11); the wounding of the head (ch. 13:3), the going "into captivity," and "the wound by a sword" (ch. 13:10, 14) would have their counterpart in the implied descent of the "beast" into the "bottomless pit" (ch. 17:8); and "death" (ch. 13:3) would be equivalent to the "bottomless pit" phase of the experience of the beast. The similarities here noted tend to identify the seventh head of the beast as the papal head (see on ch. 17:9, 10). However, this similarity does not necessarily prove identity. For the relationship of the beast of ch. 17 to that of ch. 13 see on ch. 17:3.

Bottomless pit. Gr. *abussos*, literally, "abyss," implying vast, measureless space (see on Mark 5:10; Rev. 9:1). In the LXX it generally refers either to the depths of the sea or to subterranean waters. In the LXX of Ps. 71:20 and in Rom. 10:7 it is used of the underworld, or place of the dead, commonly called Hades (see on Matt. 11:23; cf. on 2 Sam. 12:23; Prov. 15:11; Isa. 14:9). Descent into the "abyss" would thus be a fitting term to represent the death of a beast that appeared to have been slain.

Perdition. Gr. *apōleia*, "utter destruction," "annihilation" (see on John 17:12). This indicates the utter end of the beast (cf. Rev. 17:11; see on chs. 19:20; 20:10).

They that dwell. That is, those upon whom the "whore … sitteth" (v. 1) and who "have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (v. 2). Compare ch. 13:3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14; see on ch. 17:1, 2.

Wonder. Gr. *thaumazō*, "to be amazed," "to marvel" (see on v. 6). The people of earth are surprised beyond measure to behold the beast, which they had seen go away into the "bottomless pit" (v. 8), return and take up its former activities. They first "wonder" and then worship (see ch. 13:3, 4, 8, 12, 14), that is, yield their willing support to the beast in the pursuit of its blasphemous schemes. Concerning the relationship of the beast of ch. 17 to that of ch. 13 see on ch. 17:3.

Not written. That is, not listed with those whom God accepts as candidates for His kingdom.

Book of life. See on Phil. 4:3.

From the foundation. The Greek may be understood as implying that the names appearing in the book of life have been written there ever since "the foundation of the world," or simply that the book itself has been in existence since that time. Here the latter meaning is intended. Compare on ch. 13:8.

Yet is. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "is to be" or "is to come." See above on "was, and is not" and "shall ascend."

9. The mind which hath wisdom. Compare ch. 13:18. The angel thus introduces his explanation of "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" of ch. 17:8. What John had been shown was a "mystery" (cf. v. 7; see on v. 5) in the sense that reality had been concealed in symbolic language, and it would require "wisdom" to understand the figurative in terms of the literal. Although this statement of the angel probably refers most particularly to the enigma of v. 8, and thus especially to the explanation in vs. 9, 10, it is also true of the entire vision, and thus of the explanation of vs. 10–18 as a whole.

Seven heads. These apparently represent seven major political powers through which Satan has sought to destroy the people and work of God on earth (see on vs. 2, 3, 6, 10). Whether or not Inspiration intended these heads to be identified with seven specific nations of history is not clear, since in the Revelation the number "seven" often has a symbolic rather than a literal numerical value (see on ch. 1:11). Accordingly, some have understood the seven heads to represent all political opposition to the people and cause of God on earth throughout history, without specifying seven particular nations.

Others assume that the powers represented by the seven heads must be seven specific nations already referred to in the various prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. They identify the first four heads with the four great world empires of Dan. 2 and 7, the fifth with the little horn of chs. 7 and 8 and the leopardlike beast of Rev. 13, the sixth with the power represented in ch. 11:7, and the seventh with the two-horned beast of ch. 13:11. According to this pattern of interpretation the powers represented by the first five heads would be Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Roman Empire, and the papacy. The sixth and seventh heads might be revolutionary France and the United States, or the United States and a world organization, or the United States and a restored papacy.

Still others consider that the seven heads represent major persecuting powers since God first had a chosen people and an organized work on earth, and accordingly specify Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Roman Empire, and the papacy. Those who

follow this pattern of interpretation call attention to the important role of Egypt and Assyria with respect to Israel in OT history and prophecy. Also, they point to the following circumstances when each of these seven powers, in turn, attempted either to annihilate God's people, or to subjugate them, or to obliterate their distinctive religious character: (1) Egypt at the Red Sea, Ex. 14:9–30; (2) Assyria under Sennacherib, Isa. 8:4–8; 36:1–15; 37:3–37; (3) Babylon during the Captivity, Jer. 39:9, 10; 52:13–15; (4) Persia under Haman, Esther 3:8, 9; 7:4; 9:1–6; (5) Greece under Antiochus Epiphanes, 1 Macc. 1:20–64; 3:42; 4:14, 36–54; (6) Rome, in its persecution of both Jews and Christians, Dan. 8:9–12, 24, 25; Matt. 24:15, 21; Luke 21:20–24; Rev. 2:10, 13; and (7) the papacy throughout her history, Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33, 35.

In view of the fact that Inspiration has not indicated whether the seven heads are to be understood as representing seven particular nations and has not specified any point of time from which they are to be reckoned, this commentary considers that evidence is insufficient to warrant a dogmatic identification of them. Revelation 17 is concerned with the beast during its "yet is" period, when it is "the eighth" (see on vs. 8, 11), and the interpretation of the basic message of the chapter is fortunately not contingent upon the identification of the seven heads.

Mountains. A common prophetic symbol designating political or religio-political powers (see Isa. 2:2, 3; Jer. 17:3; 31:23; 51:24, 25; Eze. 17:22, 23; etc.). This symbol may also be an allusion to the city of Rome with its seven hills. Classical writers often refer to Rome as the City of Seven Hills (Horace *Carmen Saeculare* 7; Virgil *Aeneid* vi. 782–784; *Georgics* ii. 534, 535; Martial *Epigrams* iv. 64. 11, 12; Cicero *Letters to Atticus* vi. 5; Propertius *Elegies* iii. 11; etc.). In the early Christian centuries Christians commonly referred to Rome as "Babylon" (see on 1 Peter 5:13; Rev. 14:8), probably to avoid being considered as subversives when they spoke and wrote concerning Rome's anti-Christian activities and the impending judgments of God upon her. In view of the historical relationship of ancient Babylon to the people of God in OT times, the appellation "Babylon" as applied to Rome in its relations with Christianity was particularly appropriate.

The woman sitteth. Here the angel refers to the "woman" as sitting upon the seven "heads," whereas in v. 3 she is spoken, of simply as seated upon the "beast" (see comment there). Thus, to be seated upon the seven heads is apparently the same as being seated upon the beast. Accordingly, there is no sharp distinction between the beast and its heads. Probably no difference is intended.

10. And there are seven kings. Or, "and seven kings are they." These "kings" are not in addition to the "heads" and the "mountains," but, presumably, identified with them. How much distinction, if any, is intended between the "kings" and the "mountains" is not clear.

Five are fallen. The point of time at which it may be stated that five of the heads have "fallen," that one "is," and that the other has "not yet come" is not clearly indicated. Generally speaking, Adventist expositors hold one or another of three different views with respect to the point of time indicated here: (1) According to the pattern of interpretation making the seven heads representative of all powers that oppose God's people and work on earth, irrespective of number, this statement would simply mean that a majority of the powers so represented had already passed off the stage of history. (2)

Those who enumerate the first five heads as Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the papacy consider that these five had all fallen at the time the deadly wound was finally administered to the papal head of the beast in 1798 (see on ch. 13:3, 4). (3) Those who enumerate the first five heads as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece consider that the point indicated by v. 10 is the time of John, when the vision was given. See on v. 9.

One is. According to the second view, France or the United States, after 1798, and according to the third view, the Roman Empire in John's day (see above on "five are fallen").

The other. According to the first view, the minority of political powers yet to play their part; according to the second, the United States or some world organization such as the League of Nations or the United Nations; according to the third, the papacy (see above on "five are fallen"). It may be noted that if the events foretold in ch. 17 are, in part, identical with those of ch. 13 (see on ch. 17:3, 8), it follows that the papal head is the one here designated "the other."

A short space. Gr. *oligos*, used 34 times in the NT in the sense of "few," "little," "small," to specify quantity, and 8 times in the sense of "short," to specify time (see on ch. 12:12). The clause may be translated either, "It is necessary that he remain little," or, "It is necessary that he continue briefly," possibly in the sense of a "limited time" in contrast with an unlimited time. In ch. 12:12 *oligos* refers to the "short time" allotted to Satan after his defeat at the cross (cf. DA 758, 761; GC 503). Perhaps the angel here reassures John that Satan, and more particularly the power (or powers) represented by the seventh head, can never fully attain their objectives; or that their tenure has been strictly limited. Some here understand *oligos* literally, as indicating a short period of time.

11. The beast that was. See on v. 8.

Even he is the eighth. Literally, "also himself is an eighth." This is the beast in its revived state, in the "yet is" period following its ascent out of the "bottomless pit" (see on vs. 8, 10). Some consider the eighth power to be the papacy alone; others suggest that it represents Satan. Those who take the latter view point out that at the time here indicated Satan attempts to impersonate Christ (see on 2 Thess. 2:8).

Of the seven. Literally, "out of the seven." The beast itself—"the eighth"—was, it would seem, the same beast to which the seven heads had been attached (cf. ch. 13:11, 12). Absence in the Greek of the definite article before the word "eighth" suggests that the beast itself was the real authority back of the seven heads, and that it is therefore more than merely another head, the eighth in a series. It is their summation and climax—the beast itself. In the Greek the word for "eighth" is masculine and hence cannot refer to a head, the word for which is feminine.

Perdition. See on v. 8.

12. Ten horns. Compare Dan. 7:24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; see on Dan. 7:7; Rev. 12:3.

No kingdom as yet. According to some, the number "ten" specifies ten particular "kings," or nations. Others consider "ten" to be a round number, and as such to refer to all the powers of the category spoken of as "horns," irrespective of their precise arithmetical number. Such usage is common elsewhere in Scripture (see on ch. 12:3). Some take these ten horns to represent the same ten powers specified in Daniel and earlier in the Revelation. Others, on the basis that these ten "receive power as kings one

hour with the beast," consider that they cannot, therefore, be identified with the various nations that arose during the breakup of the Roman Empire.

Hour. Gr. *hōra*, "season," "daytime" (in contrast with nighttime), "a day," "an hour [a twelfth of the daylight hours]," and a definite point of "time." In Matt. 14:15 *hōra* is translated "time," meaning daytime. Other instances of such translation are Matt. 18:1; John 16:2, 4, 25; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 14:15. *Hōra* is translated "day" in Mark 6:35, "instant" in Luke 2:38, "season" in 2 Cor. 7:8 and Philemon 15, "short time" in 1 Thess. 2:17, "high time" in Rom. 13:11, and "eventide" in Mark 11:11. Obviously, the meaning of *hōra* in any particular instance must be determined by the context.

Some have taken the "one hour" of ch. 17:12 as prophetic time, according to which it would represent a period of about two weeks of literal time. However, the context seems to imply otherwise. It is generally recognized that ch. 18 gives a more detailed explanation of events described in ch. 17:12–17. But the period of time designated as "one day" in ch. 18:8 is also called "one hour" in vs. 10, 17, 19, the obvious intent of Inspiration being to indicate a brief period of time without specifying its exact length. Accordingly, it seems preferable to take the expression "one hour" in ch. 17:12 in the same sense, as indicating a brief but unspecified period of "time."

Periods of time mentioned in prophetic passages of Scripture do not always designate what is commonly known as prophetic time. For instance, the 7 years of famine predicted by Joseph were literal years (Gen. 41:25–31), as is also true of the 40 years of wandering foretold in Num. 14:34. The same might be said of the 400 years of Gen. climax of satanic planning for the unification of the world through a compact between the apostate religious organizations of earth, as represented by the woman, and the political powers of earth, as represented by the beast (see on chs. 16:13, 14; 17:3). It was apparently during this brief "hour" that John saw the "woman" seated upon the "beast," at the apex of her career, and "drunken" with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus (vs. 3–6).

13. Mind. Gr. *gnomē*, "opinion," "intention," "purpose," "resolve," "decree." In v. 17 *gnōmē* is translated "will." The "mind" of the nations of earth is diametrically opposed to that of God. The nations of earth, represented by the ten horns, here purpose to unite with the "beast" (see on v. 3) in forcing the inhabitants of earth to drink the "wine" of Babylon (see on v. 2), that is, to unite the world under her control and to obliterate all who refuse to cooperate (see on v. 14). See EW 34, 36, 282; GC 615, 624, 626; PK 512, 587; 5T 213. Compare on Rev. 16:12–16.

And shall give. Literally, "that is, they shall give." See below on "strength."

Power. Gr. *dunamis*, "[potential] capability," meaning the ability to carry out a resolve. It is through the agency of its ten horns that the beast sets out to achieve its objective.

Strength. Gr. *exousia*, "authority" (see on Mark 2:10; Rom. 13:1). The statement reads literally, "These have one purpose, that is, they shall give their capacity and authority to the beast." This unanimous consent of the nations is achieved through the agency of the three evil "spirits" (see on Rev. 16:13, 14). Now that probation has closed, God permits a worldwide religio-political union, whose objective is the annihilation of His people. Such a plan He has held in check ever since the days of Babel (see on Gen.

11:4–8; Dan. 2:43; Rev. 14:8), but now He withdraws His restraining hand (Rev. 17:17; cf. on 2 Chron. 18:18). "There will be a universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy of Satan's forces. … In the warfare to be waged in the last days there will be united, in opposition to God's people, all the corrupt powers that have apostatized from allegiance to the law of Jehovah" (EGW Supplementary Material on Rev. 17:13, 14).

14. Make war. That is, join battle. With the world united (see on chs. 16:12–16; 17:13) under the leadership of the "beast" of vs. 3, 8, 11, the final stage of the agelong warfare against Christ and His people now begins. This stage of the conflict, termed "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (ch. 16:14), is described more fully in ch. 19:11–21 (see comment there). Under the sixth plague preparations are made for the battle (see on ch. 16:12–16), which is fought under the seventh.

The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

Overcome them. God's faithful people, who have suffered so long at the hands of their enemies (see chs. 6:9–11; 12:13–17; 13:7, 15), are delivered when He who is "Lord of lords, and King of kings" lays bare His mighty arm and comes forth to champion their cause (see on chs. 11:15, 17; 18:20; 19:2, 11–21). Christ intervenes at the moment the forces of evil launch their attack on the saints, at the opening of the seventh plague (see GC 635, 636; see on ch. 16:17).

Lord of lords. The title "Lord of lords, and Kings of kings" is used in Scripture of Christ as He returns to earth to vanquish the hosts of evil and to deliver His loyal people (see 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16; cf. Matt. 25:31; Rev. 1:5; 17:14; GC 427, 428, 613, 614).

With. Gr. *meta* (see on v. 1), here meaning, "in company with."

Called. Literally, "invited," that is, in the NT, to obtain eternal salvation (see on Matt. 22:3, 14).

Chosen. Or, "selected." Not all who are "called" qualify to be "chosen." For the distinction between "called" and "chosen" see on Matt. 22:14; cf. on John 1:12.

Faithful. Or, "worthy of trust," "reliable." Those who have been "chosen" must remain "faithful," even "unto death" (ch. 2:10) if necessary, in order to be counted "with him," that is, with Christ. Addition here of the word "faithful" implies that it is not sufficient to be "called" and "chosen." In other words, those who once enter into the experience of grace through faith in Christ must "remain" in grace if they are to be eligible to enter the kingdom of glory (see on John 3:18–20; Eph. 1:4, 5; cf. on 1 Cor. 3:15; cf. Eze. 3:20; 18:24; 33:12).

15. He saith unto me. See on ch. 17:1.

Waters. See on v. 1. For other instances of waters as a symbol for human beings see on Isa. 8:7; Dan. 7:2.

Sitteth. Or, "is sitting." Here the angel again refers to what John saw in vs. 3–6, within the time period specified by vs. 11–13 (see comment there).

16. The ten horns. See on v. 12.

Upon the beast. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "and the beast." The horns *and* the beast participate in executing the divine sentence upon Babylon. Concerning the identity of the beast see on v. 3.

Shall hate. This represents a change of attitude on the part of the "beast" and the "horns." Some apply this attitude on the part of the ten horns to the attitude of some of the nations of Western Europe toward the papacy since Reformation times; others consider that the fulfillment of this prediction is yet future. Heretofore the horns had

given their support to the policies advocated by the "woman" (see on vs. 3, 9, 13), particularly to the plot to slay the saints (see on v. 14). But when Christ overcomes them (v. 14) they turn on her, realizing that she has deceived them (see on v. 2). See on GC 654–656.

The whore. See on v. 1.

Desolate. Gr. *erēmoō*, "to desolate," "to lay waste" (cf. on v. 3). The form of the word in Greek implies that "the whore" will ever remain "desolate" (see on ch. 18:21). For a more complete description of the harlot's desolate state see ch. 18:22, 23.

Naked. That is, deprived of her gorgeous attire (vs. 3, 4), and thus left in embarrassment and shame. See GC 655, 656; cf. Eze23:29; Rev. 16:15.

Flesh. Literally, "flesh pieces," which stresses the action of devouring and the completeness of the act. As a beast of prey rends and tears its victim in the process of devouring it, so "the whore" is to be violently, pitilessly destroyed by the very powers that had so recently supported her (see above on "shall hate").

Burn her. Literally, "burn her up completely." Compare ch. 18:8, which reads: "she shall be utterly burned with fire." A figurative woman would, of course, be burned figuratively. See on Rev.18:8, 9; cf. Eze. 28:17–19.

17. God hath put. The "ten horns" and the "beast" (see on v. 16) are authorized by God to execute the divine "judgment," or "sentence," passed upon "Babylon" for her crimes (see on Rev.17:1; cf. on 1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Chron. 18:18; 2 Thess. 2:11). Accordingly, Rev. 17:16, 17 constitutes the climax of the chapter, presenting, as it does, "the judgment of [or, "sentence upon"] the great whore," the topic announced by the angel in v. 1. All else is preparatory to, and explanatory of, this account of the fate of "Babylon the great." Verses 2–6 provide a catalogue of her crimes (see on v. 6), and thus an explanation of *why* the sentence has been pronounced upon her, whereas v. 8–18 set forth the means by which, or *how,* the sentence will be executed (see on v. 1). This sentence will be meted out to Babylon under the seventh plague (see ch. 16:19; cf. on chs. 16:19; 18:5, 21; 19:2).

Hearts. Or, "minds."

Fulfil his will. That is, to carry out the "purpose," or "decree" (see on v. 13) of the heavenly assize concerning "the great whore" (see on chs. 16:19; 17:1).

To agree. See on v. 13.

Give their kingdom. See on v. 13.

Words of God. That is, His "will" as expressed in the sentence against mystical Babylon (see Rev. 16:17, 19; 17:1).

Fulfilled. That is, until the sentence be fully executed. The united apostate religious organizations of the world (see on ch. 16:13), together with their leaders, are first to fall (cf. GC 656), as the political side of the universal religio-political coalition (see on chs. 16:13; 17:5) becomes an instrument in the hands of God to execute the sentence against the religious side of the union (cf. Isa. 10:5; 13:4–9; 14:4, 6; 28:17–22; 47:11–15; Jer. 25:14, 34–38; 50:9–15, 29–31; 51:49; Eze. 26:3; Dan. 11:45; Zech. 11:10; see on Rev. 19:2).

18. The woman. See on v. 3.

That great city. Literal Babylon was *the* "great city" of ancient times (see Additional Note on Dan. 4). From the days of Babel the city of Babylon has been representative of organized opposition to the purposes of God on earth (see on Gen. 11:4–6; Rev. 14:8). A

city is a highly organized and integrated association of human beings. Hence, how appropriate is "Babylon the great" as a prophetic symbol for the organized, universal, apostate religious organization.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 GC 536
4–6GC 382
6 GC 59
14 AA 371; COL 421; PK 721; 5T 223
15 GC 440
18 GC 382; PP 167

CHAPTER 18

[6]

2 *Babylon is fallen*. 4 *The people of God commanded to depart out of her*. 9 *The kings of the earth,* 11 *with the merchants and mariners, lament over her*. 20 *The saints rejoice for the judgments of God upon her*.

1. After these things. This refers to the sequence in which chs. 17 and 18 were revealed to John, not necessarily to the sequence of events therein recorded. John does not mean that the events of ch. 18 take place subsequently to all of those referred to in ch. 17. See on ch. 4:1.

Another angel. That is, another than the angel of ch. 17. This angel unites with the third angel of ch. 14:9–11 in the proclamation of God's final message to the world (EW 277), and his message is a repetition of that of the second angel of ch. 14:8 (GC 603).

From heaven. The angel is represented as having come forth from the presence of God on a special mission, and in the act of descending to earth, at the time John saw him.

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority" (see on ch. 17:13). This angel comes forth from the throne room of the universe; commissioned to proclaim God's last message of mercy and to warn the inhabitants of earth of the imminent fate awaiting "Babylon the great."

Lightened. Or, "illuminated." Despite satanic efforts to shroud the earth in darkness, God now sets it ablaze with the glorious light of saving truth (see on John 1:4, 5, 9).

Glory. Gr. *doxa* (see on John 1:14; Rom. 3:23). The "glory" may be thought of as representing the character of God (cf. Ex. 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7), here particularly as revealed in the plan of salvation.

2. Cried mightily. In order that all might hear. The message of ch. 18 is to be proclaimed during the time of the loud cry of the third angel (GC 603, 604, 614, 615, 653), and thus merits the most careful study.

Babylon the great. See on chs. 14:8; 17:5.

Is fallen. See on ch. 14:8. Her spiritual fall is now to be demonstrated and confirmed, and she is now to be punished. Compare Isa. 13:21, 22; 21:9; Jer. 51:8.

Devils. Literally, "demons" (see on Mark 1:23). "Babylon the great" is now wholly demon possessed (see on Rev. 17:5, 6, 14. cf. on Matt. 12:43–45). Perhaps, in a special

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[6]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 15:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

sense, reference is here made to modern spiritism (see on Rev. 13:13; Rev. 13:13, 14; cf. EW 273, 274; GC 558, 588, 624).

Foul spirit. Literally, "unclean spirit" (see on Mark 1:23).

Unclean and hateful bird. Metaphor is graphically added to metaphor to intensify the description of Babylon's utter perversion and apostasy. In literary form ch. 18 reflects the structure of ancient Hebrew poetry (see Vol. III, p. 23).

3. All nations. See on ch. 17:2.

Wine of the wrath. See on ch. 14:8.

Kings of the earth. See on chs. 16:14; 17:2, 10, 12.

Committed fornication. See on ch. 17:2.

Merchants. Gr. *emporoi*, literally, "ones on a journey," and thus "travelers," or "merchants." The highly figurative language of ch. 18 leaves it uncertain whether these "merchants" are literal or figurative. Either is possible. If figurative, these "merchants" would represent those who advocate the teachings and policies of "Babylon the great" (cf. Isa. 47:11–15), the goods she has for display and sale to the people of the world, to deceive them (see on Rev. 18:11).

Abundance. Gr. *dunamis*, "power," here, probably in the sense of "influence." Compare on ch. 5:12.

Delicacies. Gr. *strēnos*, "wantonness," "idle luxury" (cf. on v. 7).

4. Another voice. That is, as the Greek implies, another angelic voice.

Come out of her. Almost till the very close of time, apparently, some—perhaps many—of God's people have not heard the call to come out of mystical Babylon. Compare God's call to His people in ancient times to flee from literal Babylon (see Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, 45). As God's people formerly came out of literal Babylon in order that they might return to Jerusalem, so His people today are called out of mystical Babylon in order that they may be accounted worthy to enter the New Jerusalem. Presumably, all who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call (see on Matt. 7:21–27; cf. John 10:4, 5). This "voice" repeats the call of the second angel of Rev. 14:8 (see GC 390, 603; EW 277). The immediate reasons for this imperative call are stated in the last part of the verse.

Partakers. This is the first of two reasons given for hastening out of mystical Babylon. Those who partake of the sins of Babylon obviously have a share of responsibility for them (cf. Jer. 51:6).

Her sins. In a general sense, all the sins she leads men to commit, but more specifically, the sins delineated in ch. 17:2–6 (see on v. 6). In ch. 18 Babylon is arraigned before the bar of divine justice on five counts: (1) pride and arrogance, (2) materialism and luxury, (3) adultery, (4) deception, and (5) persecution (see vs. 2, 3, 5, 7, 23, 24).

Her plagues. That is, the punishment about to be meted out to her in compliance with the "judgment," or "sentence," of ch. 17:1 (see on chs. 16:19; 17:1, 17). The nature of these "plagues" is set forth briefly in chs. 16:19; 17:16; 18:8, 21. Most of ch. 18 consists of a graphic but highly figurative and indirect description of these "plagues." Whereas the first five of the seven last plagues are poured out primarily upon those who collaborate with Babylon—the rulers and the inhabitants of earth (ch. 17:1, 2, 8, 12)—the punishment of Babylon, the united apostate religious organizations of earth, takes place

under the seventh plague (see on chs. 16:19; 17:1, 5, 16). The sixth plague prepares the way for that punishment.

5. Her sins. See on Rev. 18:4; cf. Jer. 50:14.

Reached. Gr. *kollaō*, literally, "to glue together," "to fasten firmly together." The sins of Babylon are depicted as a mountainous mass reaching upward, compact and glued together.

Unto heaven. As the figurative mountain pierces the sky, so the criminal career of "Babylon the great" (see on ch. 17:6) arises before God, calling for retribution (Rev. 16:19; cf. Gen. 11:4, 5; 18:20, 21; Ezra 9:6; Jer. 51:9; Dan. 5:26, 27; Jonah 1:2). Perhaps there is an allusion here to the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4).

Remembered. God's long'suffering is about to end and His judgment upon mystical Babylon about to be executed (see on ch. 16:19). As applied to God, the word "remembered" commonly denotes that He is on the point of rewarding men for a particular course of action, whether good or evil (see Gen. 8:1; Ex. 2:24; Ps. 105:42; etc.).

Her iniquities. That is, her wicked acts and their consequent results, most particularly, the specific crimes charged against her in chs. 17 and 18 (see on chs. 17:6; 18:6, 7).

6. Reward her. Literally, "give her to the limit." The harlot, that is, the apostate organization "Babylon the great" (see on chs. 14:8; 17:5), is to be repaid in full for her evil deeds. In absolute justice, Heaven does not withhold any part of the payment due. The reward to be meted out to Babylon is briefly described in ch. 17:16, 17, and at greater length in ch. 18. Compare Jer. 51:6.

As she rewarded you. Literally, "according to her deeds." Her reward will be paid in kind. The punishment will fit the crime, that is, be appropriate to it. Compare Isa. 47:3; Jer. 50:15, 29; 51:24.

Double unto her double. Literally, "double to her the double." Mete to her a double measure (cf. Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18; 17:18).

Her works. Her treatment of others is to be the norm, or standard, by which God will deal with her.

The cup. See on chs. 14:10; 17:4.

Fill. Literally, "mix." In the same cup in which she had mixed an evil potion for others to drink, God will now mix a terrible mixture and compel her to drink it (Rev. 14:8; 17:4; cf. Jer. 50:15, 29).

7. How much. Measure for measure, the punishment will fit the crime. Her suffering and mourning will be in proportion to her former boasting and dissipation.

Glorified herself, and lived deliciously. The first part of v. 7 reads literally, "so many things have glorified her and made her wanton." So many things have contributed to her pride and wantonness. Arrogant self-confidence has made her confident of the ultimate success of her plot to obliterate God's remnant people and to reign supreme over the earth. She is proud of her wealth, popularity, and power. Compare Isa. 47:6–10; Eze. 28:2, 4, 5, 16.

Torment. See on chs. 17:16; 18:4.

Sorrow. Or, "mourning," that is, as a result of the "plagues" (v. 4) that "torture" her. Compare the lamentation of the "kings" and "merchants" (vs. 9, 11).

Saith in her heart. Or, "is saying in her mind," that is, at the time the angel of v. 4 delivers his message of warning, prior to the close of probation, and later, during the sixth plague (see on ch. 17:1). Inordinate conceit has spawned utter confidence in her evil scheme to rule the world. The attempt to deceive others has resulted in absolute self-deception. Not only has she made others "drunk," she herself is in a state of intoxication (see on ch. 17:2, 6).

I sit a queen. Note the present tense (see above on "saith in her heart"). The true church is represented in Scripture as a "chaste virgin" (see on 2 Cor. 11:2), Christ's bride (see on Eph. 5:23–32; cf. on Rev. 12:1; 19:7, 8). The great harlot impersonates Christ's bride before the inhabitants of earth, over whom she claims dominion in His name. But she is a counterfeit "queen" (cf. Isa. 47:6–10). She is a harlot who has never had a legal husband, yet is able to boast of her conquests. Do not the "kings" and "great men" of the earth wait upon her (Rev. 18:9, 23)? Are they not captive to her will and dedicated instruments of her nefarious schemes (see on ch. 17:2)?

No widow. As a "widow" she would have no legal status, or claim upon the allegiance of the people of earth. Compare Isa. 47:8, 10.

Sorrow. What she least expects is certain to come upon her (see on Isa. 47:11).

8. Therefore. That is, because of her haughty boasting, proud self-exaltation, abandoned wantonness, unscrupulous lust for power and supremacy, and daring opposition to the revealed will of God.

Her plagues. See on v. 4.

One day. Some take this to be prophetic time, and thus to represent one literal year. Others consider that the angel here either stresses the suddenness and unexpectedness of the "plagues" upon mystical Babylon, particularly in view of her false sense of security (v. 7), or speaks of an indefinite period of time. In view of the fact that the same event is also said to take place in "one hour" (vs. 10, 17, 19), the second explanation appears preferable (see on Rev. 17:12; cf. Jer. 50:29, 31). Furthermore, the Greek form of the words here translated "day" and "hour" (Rev. 18:10) suggest a point—rather than a period—of time, and thus appear to stress suddenness and unexpectedness rather than duration. Compare Isa. 47:9, 11; 50:31; 51:8.

Death. The final result of "her plagues" is stated first (see on v. 21).

Mourning. See on v. 7.

Famine. There is a literal famine under the fourth plague (ch. 16:8, 9), experienced by the adherents of Babylon (cf. vs. 1, 2). However, the judgment of Babylon as an organization takes place under the seventh plague (vs. 18, 19), and the famine here referred to is doubtless figurative—as would naturally be the case with a figurative entity such as mystical Babylon, and in keeping with the highly poetic and figurative character of the entire chapter.

Utterly burned. Or, "burned up." The figurative woman Babylon would, of course, be "burned up" with figurative fire (cf. Eph. 6:16; 1 Peter 4:12; see on Rev. 17:16). Her fate is described by an altogether different figure in ch. 18:21. For a description of events here foretold see GC 653–657.

Fire. Compare Jer. 50:32; 51:24, 25, 37.

Strong. That is, fully able to carry out His will upon Babylon (cf. ch. 17:17).

Judgeth her. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "has judged." The judgment pronounced upon Babylon is so certain that the angel speaks of it as already

accomplished. See on chs. 16:19; 17:1, 17; 19:2. What befalls her is not an accident, but a deliberate act of God.

9. Kings of the earth. See on chs. 16:14, 16; 17:2, 12–14.

Committed fornication. See on ch. ch. 17:2.

Lived deliciously. See on v. 7.

Bewail her. Or, "mourn for her," "sob on account of her," in loud, unrestrained wailing. Anticipating their own impending fate, the hapless "kings" and "merchants" (v. 11) of earth join in a dirge of death for haughty Babylon, now in torment upon her blazing funeral pyre. The dramatic effect of vs. 9–20, which describe the inexorable doom of the great harlot, is heightened by their exotic Oriental literary form—poetic diffuseness highlighted by graphic imagery. The appeal of ch. 18 is primarily emotional, but that appeal is reinforced by incisive logic: For those who respond to God's call to flee from the wrath to come (v. 4) there is still respite from her impending doom.

The symbolism of the chapter is drawn almost entirely from the OT, as a comparison of the many cross references cited makes evident (see Additional Note at end of chapter). A careful study of these OT parallels in connection with the historical incidents there alluded to greatly clarifies the highly symbolic imagery of this chapter. In ch. 17:16 it is the kings of the earth (cf. on v. 12) who set Babylon afire. Here, they are pictured mourning the results of that deed, perhaps in the sad realization that they must soon share Babylon's fate (cf. Isa. 47:13–15).

Lament. Gr. *koptō*, literally, "to beat [one's breast]," "to cut [one's body]" in grief.

Smoke of her burning. Compare Isa. 13:19; Jer. 50:32; see on Rev. 14:10, 11; 17:16; 18:6.

10. Afar off. Doubtless in the realization that, but recently, they had collaborated with Babylon (see v. 3), were involved in her "sins," and were, accordingly, destined to share in her "plagues" (v. 4). They realize that their own fate is inexorably bound up with hers. They had not heeded God's call to "come out of her" (v. 4), and must soon share her fate. Compare Eze. 27:33, 35.

Alas, alas. They had expected to "receive power" (see on ch. 17:12) permanently with their paramour, mystical Babylon. She had assured them that she was enthroned a "queen" forever and that, should they cast their lot with her, they too would enjoy endless dominion (see on ch. 17:2). Realizing, too late, the futility of such a scheme, they now give way to utter remorse.

Great city. See on chs. 14:8; 17:5, 18; 18:7. In the Greek the ascription of former greatness and power to mystical Babylon is most emphatic. The emptiness of her claims is now fully apparent, for "strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (v. 8).

Babylon. See on ch. 17:5, 18.

One hour. See on chs. 17:12; 18:8.

Judgment. Gr. *krisis*, the "[act of] judging," or "[execution of] judgment," in contrast with *krima*, the "[sentence of] judgment" (see on ch. 17:1). Whereas ch. 17 deals primarily with the *sentence* against Babylon, ch. 18 is concerned with the *execution* of that sentence.

11. Merchants. According to one interpretation, these "merchants" are the literal commercial and business leaders of earth, whose financial and material support have contributed so much to the luxury, splendor, and success of Babylon the great (see on vs.

7, 12–15). According to another interpretation, these are figurative "merchants," representative of the peddlers of the spiritual merchandise of Babylon, those who have sold her doctrines and policies to the kings and peoples of earth (see on chs. 16:13, 14; 17:2, 4; see below on "merchandise"). In ch. 18:23 these "merchants" are said to be "the great men of the earth." Compare Isa. 23:2, 8, 17, 18; 47:13, 15.

Weep and mourn. See on v. 9.

No man buyeth. The kings and peoples of earth are disillusioned, and refuse to have anything to do with Babylon. Compare Isa. 23:14; Eze. 26:15–18.

Merchandise. Gr. *gomos*, the "lading," or "load," of a ship or a beast of burden, and thus "merchandise." According to the first interpretation mentioned above, this would be literal articles of manufacture and trade, and according to the second, or figurative interpretation, the doctrines and policies of mystical Babylon, elsewhere spoken of as her "wine" (see on ch. 17:2). The highly figurative character of ch. 18 (see on v. 9) tends to favor the latter interpretation (see above on "merchants"). With the destruction of Babylon there is an end to the flow of corrupt goods that have been sold and distributed in her name, and by which she has deceived the world.

12. Merchandise of gold. Attempts to classify the 28 items of trade listed in vs. 12, 13 and to draw some hidden meaning from them are without exegetical value. The highly diffuse and poetic character of ch. 18 suggests that the purpose of the list here given is to highlight the extensive commercial interests of Babylon, if the first interpretation mentioned in comment on v. 11 be accepted, or, according to the second, to stress the comprehensiveness of her corrupt doctrines and policies (see on chs. 16:13, 14; 17:2, 4). For a similar list of "merchandise" see Eze. 27:3–25, 33.

Thyine wood. Literally, "scented wood," that is, odoriferous wood used for incense.

Brass. Rather, "bronze" (see on Ex. 25:3).

13. Odours. Rather, "incense." Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the addition of *amōmon*, a "spice" extracted from a fragrant plant that grows in India, between the words "cinnamon" and "odours."

Ointments. Gr. *muron*, "myrrh" (see on Matt. 2:11).

Frankincense. See on Matt. 2:11.

Wine. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

Beasts. Gr. *ktēnē*, domesticated animals such as cattle and beasts of burden. Here probably cattle alone are meant.

Chariots. Gr. *rhedai*, a loan word from the Gallic, or Celtic introduced into Asia Minor by the Gauls who became the Galatians. *Rhedai* really does not mean chariots, but four-wheeled travel coaches. The use of this word in Revelation suggests that the author had lived in Asia Minor and had acquired a term familiar in that area.

Slaves. Literally, "bodies" (cf. Rom. 8:11; etc.). As an item of trade, of course, this would mean "slaves."

And souls of men. Rather, "that is, human beings." In the Bible the word "soul" often means "human being," or "person" (see on Ps. 16:10; Matt. 10:28). Compare, "of men an hundred thousand" (1 Chron. 5:21), literally, "of the souls of men an hundred thousand"; "they traded the persons of men" (Eze. 27:13), literally, "they traded the souls of men."

Some have considered "souls of men" here to be a reference to the spiritual nature of the human beings under consideration.

14. Fruits. Gr. *apōra*, "fruits," or more specifically, "the season of ripe fruits," in late summer or early autumn. Figuratively, here, reference may be to the time to which the great harlot looked forward when she could enjoy to the full the fruits of her lust (see on chs. 17:4, 6; 18:7).

Thy soul lusted after. Literally, "of the desire of thy soul," meaning, "of your desire." The word "soul" is often equivalent to the personal pronoun (see on Ps. 16:10; Matt. 10:28; Rev. 18:13).

Dainty and goodly. Literally, "the fat things and the splendid things," that is, everything that contributed to her life of luxury and wantonness (see on v. 7).

Find them no more at all. The finality of the fate that has overtaken Babylon is repeated in similar words six times in vs. 21–23. Babylon now descends into the "perdition" described in ch. 17:8, 11, never to rise again. Compare Jer. 51:26; Eze. 26:21; 27:36; 28:19.

15. Merchants. See on v. 11.

These things. See vs. 12, 13.

Made rich by her. Partnership with Babylon had been mutually beneficial (cf. Eze. 27:33).

Stand afar off. See on v. 10.

Weeping and wailing. See on v. 9.

16. Alas, alas. See on v. 10.

That great city. See on v. 10.

Clothed. See on ch. 17:4.

Fine linen. Compare on ch. 19:8.

Purple, and scarlet. See on ch. 17:4.

Decked. See on ch. 17:4.

17. One hour. See on chs. 17:12; 18:8.

So great riches. Or, "all this wealth" (see on vs. 7, 11–14).

Is come to nought. Literally, "has been made desolate" (see on ch. 17:16).

Shipmaster Gr. *kubernētēs*, "helmsman," meaning the officer in charge of navigating a ship, whether or not he does the actual steering—not its owner (cf. Acts 27:11). In highly figurative language (see on Rev. 18:9) John proceeds to develop the picture suggested by the "merchants" and their trade (vs. 11–15).

All the company in ships. Or, "everyone sailing for a place," presumably to engage in trade. This may be taken in apposition with "shipmaster," the two expressions thus reading, "every ship's captain, that is, everyone sailing for a place." The picture is of a ship's captain taking his ship from one port to another to engage in trade.

Trade by sea. Literally, "work the sea," that is, obtain a living from the sea, in contrast with those who do so by working the land. This would include such occupations as shipbuilding, fishing, pearl diving, and gathering the shellfish from which purple dye was extracted (see on Luke 16:19). Compare Eze. 26:17; 27:26–32.

Stood afar off. See on v. 10.

18. Cried. Or, "cried out," or "continued to shout." There was a veritable babel of voices as the persons mentioned in v. 17 kept shouting back and forth.

Smoke of her burning. See on v. 9.

What city. Ancient Babylon was unique (see Vol. IV, pp. 794–799). Compare Eze. 27:32.

This great city. See on chs. 14:8; 17:5, 18; 18:10.

19. Cast dust. A sign of extreme shame or grief, here the latter (see on v. 9). Compare Eze. 27:30; see on Joshua 7:6.

Cried. See on v. 18.

Weeping and wailing. See on v. 9.

Alas, alas. See on v. 10.

Made rich. See on v. 15.

All that had ships. See on v. 17.

By reason of her costliness. Literally, "from her expansiveness." Babylon's extravagant requirements brought wealth to those who traded in the goods in which she was interested.

One hour. See on chs. 17:12; 18:8.

Made desolate. See on ch. 17:16. Compare Isa. 13:19–22; 47:11; Jer. 50:13, 40; 51:26, 29; Eze. 26:17, 19.

20. Rejoice. Or, "keep on exulting." The summary desolation of Babylon brings victory and joy to all righteous beings throughout the universe. The anthem of victory over Babylon is recorded in ch. 19:1–6, and the feast celebrating the deliverance of God's people is alluded to in vs. 7–9.

Heaven. The inhabitants of heaven are first to rejoice in the triumph of Christ and His church.

Holy apostles. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "saints and apostles." The "apostles" would be the leaders of NT times, whereas "saints" would refer to the general church membership.

Prophets. Perhaps prophets generally, though here, more likely, those of OT times (see on Eph. 2:20).

Avenged you. Literally, "judged your judgment," meaning "executed your sentence." She had decreed the death of God's people (see ch. 13:15; see on ch. 17:6), but now suffers the very fate to which she had consigned them. Compare the fate of Haman (Esther 7:10). For the means by which the divine sentence upon Babylon is to be executed see on Rev. 17:1, 16, 17. This event takes place under the seventh plague (ch. 16:19; cf. ch. 19:2).

21. A mighty angel. Literally, "one strong angel."

A great millstone. A millstone of such a size as was anciently turned by an animal, in contrast with small millstones that were turned by hand.

Cast it into the sea. Compare Jeremiah's illustration of the fate of ancient Babylon (Jer. 51:63, 64; see on Isa. 13:19; Rev. 14:8). For a Biblical explanation of the symbol of inundation see Isa. 8:7, 8; Jer. 50:9; 51:27, 42; Eze. 26:3, 4.

With violence. Literally, "with a rush," "with a shock." This word is used by classical Greek writers of the shock of battle and of a surging flood. In Acts 14:5 a cognate word is rendered "assault." With one tremendous throw the millstone is hurled into the depths of the sea. Thus, with finality (see on Rev. 18:14), will Babylon sink into oblivion, or "perdition" (ch. 17:8). Compare Jer. 51:42, 64; Eze. 26:3, 19; 27:32, 34.

Found no more at all. See on v. 14. John's description of the desolate state of ancient Babylon (vs. 21–23) must have been particularly impressive to the people of his day, in

view of the fact that it was within their lifetime that the hapless city finally became an uninhabited waste (see on Isa. 13:19).

22. Voice. Or, "sound." Verses 22, 23 constitute a vivid and highly figurative description of the desolate state of Babylon (see on v. 19). Compare Isa. 24:8; Eze. 26:13.

Harpers. Gr. *kithrarōdoi*, musician-singers who played the *kithara*, "cithara," as accompaniment to their songs, and thus "minstrels." The cithara was a stringed instrument with a wooden sounding box and closely resembled a lyre (see Vol. III, pp. 34–37).

Pipers. Rather, "flute players." See Vol. III, pp. 37, 38.

Heard no more at all. The arts and merrymaking have ceased. See on Rev. 18:14; cf. Eze. 26:13.

Craftsman. The artisans, mechanics, and skilled workmen have all gone. Manufacture has ceased.

23. Candle. Literally, "lamp" (see on ch. 1:12). The utter blackness of night vividly portrays the absence of all life.

Bridegroom. All social and family life have come to an end (cf. Jer. 25:10).

Thy merchants. See on v. 11.

Great men of the earth. Compare Isa. 23:8; Eze. 26:17; 27:8; Rev. 6:15.

Sorceries. That is, the deceptions practiced by Babylon to secure the allegiance of the inhabitants of earth. See chs. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20; see on ch. 17:2; cf. Isa. 47:9, 12, 13.

24. Blood. See on chs. 16:6; 17:6.

Prophets. See on v. 20.

All that were slain. Mystical Babylon represents apostate religion since the beginning of time (see on chs. 14:8; 17:5, 13). However, chs. 13 to 18 are concerned most particularly with the culmination of apostasy at the end of time. Thus, in a general sense, "all that were slain" may properly include the martyrs of all time, but emphasis here is doubtless on those who lay down their lives in the closing struggle of the great controversy between good and evil, and probably also those whom Babylon purposes to slay but is prevented from slaying, by divine intervention (see on ch. 17:6; cf. Isa. 47:6; Jer. 51:47–49).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 18

Mystical Babylon plays a major role in Rev. 14 to 19, particularly chs. 17; 18. In view of the fact that the imagery of the Revelation appears to be based largely on historical parallels in the OT (see p. 725), and especially since mystical Babylon is the figurative counterpart of the ancient literal city situated on the Euphrates (see on chs. 14:8; 17:5), a comparison of relevant OT passages may be expected to clarify, at least in part, the role attributed by Inspiration to mystical Babylon.

In large measure the imagery of the Revelation concerned with mystical Babylon is drawn from Isa. 13; 14; 47; Jer. 25; 50; 51; Eze. 26–28. For an analysis of the contribution of these OT passages to the subject under consideration see on Isa. 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1; Eze. 26:13. In the following comparative table, the left-hand column consists of a composite, topical series of statements in the Revelation concerning mystical Babylon. The right-hand column lists the more significant OT passages dealing with ancient Babylon. Note the one exception—No. 5.

Mystical Babylon

Mystical Babylon in the Revelation	Old Testament Parallels
HER IDENTITY AND CHARACTER	
1. *Meaning of the name.* "Upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great" (17:5; cf. 17:7; see on 14:8; 17:5). "What city is like unto this great city!" (18:18; cf. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5, 18; 18:2, 10, 16, 21; see on 17:18).	1. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel" (Gen. 11:9; cf. 10:9, 10; 11:1-9; see on 11:4-9). "Great Babylon," (Dan. 4:30; cf. Isa.13:19; 14:4). "[His] look was more stout [literally, "greater"] than his fellows" (Dan. 7:20). Compare Isa. 23:8; Eze. 26:17;27:32.
2. *An apostate organization*. "The great whore" "fornication" "a woman" "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (17:1, 2, 3, 5; cf. 14:8; 17:6, 17:7, 18; 18:4; 19:2).	2. "The lady of kingdoms" (Isa. 47:5). "The Babylonians . . . defiled her with their whoredom" (Eze. 23:17; cf. Isa.23:15; Eze. 16:15, 38, 44; 23:2, 3; Nahum 3:4).
3. *Wholly corrupt in character*. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (18:2; cf. 14:8). "Her sins have reached unto heaven" (18:5).	3. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Isa. 21:9 cf. Jer. 51:8). "Babylon . . . hath sinned against the Lord" Jer. 50:14; cf. (50:24, 29, 31, 32; 51:6). "Her judgment reacheth unto heaven" (Jer. 51:9). "Full of doleful creatures" (Isa. 13:21).
4. *Marked by luxury and pride*. "She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously" "was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls" (18:7, 16; cf. 17:4).	4. "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (Isa. 13:19). "Tender and delicate" "given to pleasures . . . dwellest carelessly" (Isa.47:1, 8). "The golden city" (Isa. 14:4). "Abundant in treas-

	ures" (Jer. 51:13). Compare Eze. 27:7, 16, 25; 28:2, 5, 13, 17.
5. *Her counterpart.* "That great city, the holy Jerusalem" (21:10).	5. "The Lord . . . shall choose Jerusalem" (Zech. 2:12). "They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord" (Jer. 3:17).

HER AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES

6. *To rule the world.* "She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (18:7). She reigns "over the kings of the earth" and lures them to "make war with the Lamb" (17:18, 14; cf. 12:17; 13:7; 18:6; 19:19).	6. "Thou [Babylon] saidst, I shall be a lady for ever." "Thou . . . sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children" (Isa. 47:7, 8; cf. v. 10). "The king of Babylon, . . . the oppressor." "He that ruled the nations in anger" (Isa. 14:4, 6).
7. *To annihilate the saints*. "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17:6). "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (18:24).	7. "Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall" (Jer. 51:49). "Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his [Israel's] bones" (Jer. 50:17). "Thou didst shew them no mercy" (Isa. 47:6). Compare Ezra 5:12; Isa. 14:4, 6; Jer. 50:11; 51:25; Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24.

HER ACCOMPLICES

8. Demonic spirits. "Babylon . . . is become the habitation of devils" (18:2). "Three unclean spirits" "the spirits of devils" (16:13, 14).	8. "The king of Babylon" "Lucifer" (Isa. 14:4, 12; see Eze. 28:12).

9. *The great powers of earth.* "A scarlet coloured beast" (17:3; cf. 19:19, 20). "The beast that was, and is not, and yet is" "even he is the eighth" "[when he] shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (17:8, 11). "Seven heads" "seven mountains" "seven kings" (17:9, 10; see Additional Note on Chapter 17).	9. "Like a lion . . . [with] eagle's wings" (Dan. 7:4). Compare Dan. 7:7, 19. "I am against thee [Babylon], O destroying mountain, . . . and will make thee a burnt mountain" (Jer. 51:25; see on Isa. 2:2).
10. *All nations.* "The ten horns . . . are ten kings, which . . . receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (17:12; cf. vs. 3, 7, 16). "The kings of the earth" (16:14; cf. 17:2; 18:3, 9). "These have one mind" "[and] agree" (17:13, 17).	10. "Ten horns" (Dan. 7:7; cf. v. 24). Compare Dan. 2:43. See on Rev. 17:12.
11. *Other apostate religious organizations.* "Harlots" (17:5). "The false prophet" (19:20; 20:10). "An image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live" (13:14).	11. See No. 2.
12. *The leaders of earth.* "Thy merchants were the great men of the earth" (18:23; cf. vs. 3, 11, 15). "Every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea" (18:17; cf. v. 19).	12. "The astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators" "with whom thou [Babylon] hast laboured, even thy merchants" (Isa. 47:13, 15). "Tyre, . . . whose merchants are princes, . . . the honourable of the earth" (Isa. 23:8). "All the ships of the

	sea with their mariners" "thy rowers" "thy mariners, and thy pilots," "all thy company" (Eze. 27:9, 26, 27).
13. *The peoples of earth.* "All nations" (14:8; 18:3). "The inhabitants of the earth" (17:2; cf. v. 18). "They that dwell on the earth" (17:8).	13. "All the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth" (Isa. 23:17; cf. Jer. 51:49).

HER STRATEGY

14. *Universal religio-political union*. "Sit upon a scarlet coloured beast" "the beast that carrieth her" "seven heads . . . on which the woman sitteth" (17:3, 7, 9). "The kings of the earth, . . . have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her" (18:9; cf. 17:2, 4; 18:3). "Receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These . . . shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (17:12, 13).	14. "[Tyre] shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth" (Isa. 23:17). See No. 2.
15. *Her policy and teachings*. "A golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (17:4). "She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (14:8; cf. 17:2; 18:3). "Did corrupt the earth with her fornication" (19:2).	15. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. 51:7).
16. *Satanic miracles: deception*. "The spirits of devils, working miracles"	16. "The multitude of thy [Babylon's] sorceries" "the great abundance of

(16:14; cf. 13:13, 14; 19:20). "By thy sorceries were all nations deceived" (18:23). "Great wonders" "miracles" (13:13, 14). "Merchandise" (18:11).	thine enchantments" (Isa. 47:9; cf. 47:12, 13). With a few exceptions the long list of 18:12, 13 is duplicated in Eze. 27.
17. *Absolute control of men's minds.* "Sitteth upon many waters" "[that is] peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (17:1, 15). "They that dwell on the earth shall wonder . . . when they behold the beast" (17:8; cf. 13:13, 14).	17. "Dwellest upon many waters" (Jer. 51:13; cf. Eze. 28:2). "All people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him" (Dan. 5:19).

HER FATE

18. *God arraigns Babylon.* "It is done." "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" (16:17, 19;cf. 18:5). "The judgment of the great whore" (17:1; cf. 19:2). "Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (18:8).	18. "I have taken out of thine [Israel's] hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee" (Isa. 51:22, 23). "I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation . . . for their iniquity." "Ye [Babylon] shall certainly drink . . . Should ye be utterly unpunished? . . . The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation" (Jer. 25:12, 28-30; cf. Jer. 50:18, 31). "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. . . . Thou art weighed in the balances, and art

	found wanting" (Dan. 5:26, 27).
19. *Her accomplices turn against her.* "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (17:17). "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (17:13). Gathered the kings of the earth "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (16:14). "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them" (17:14). "The ten horns" and "the beast [see on 17:16] . . . shall ate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (17:16; cf. 18:19; 19:20). "Her plagues . . . death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire" (18:8).	19. "I will bring upon that land [Babylon] all my words which I have provnounced against it, even all that is written" (Jer. 25:13). "Blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms." "For every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon" (Jer. 51:27, 29). "I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations" (Jer. 50:9). "The kingdoms of nations gathered together [against Babylon]: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle" (Isa. 13:4). "I will kindle a fire in his cities" (Jer. 50:32). "The mighty men of Babylon . . . have burned her dwellingplaces (Jer. 51:30)."
20. *Her annihilation is absolute.* "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all" (18:21). "Divided into three	20. "The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof." "Bind a stone to it [a document foretelling Babylon's doom], and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and

parts" (16:19; cf. 13:2, 4, 11, 15; 16:13; 19:20). "The voice of hapers, and musicians, and of pipers, and tumpeters, . . . shall be heard no more at all in thee" (18:22, 23). "Her plagues come in one day" "in one hour" (18:8, 10; cf. 18:17, 19).	shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her" (Jer. 51:42, 63, 64; cf. Eze. 26:3, 19; 27:32, 34). "Two things shall come. to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood" "[evil] shall . . . come upon thee [Babylon]; . . . mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly. . . . None shall save thee" (Isa. 47:9 11, 15; cf. Jer. 50:32; 51:8, 13, 26, 29). "Thy kingdom is divided" (Dan. 5:28; cf. Zech. 10:3; 11:8). "Babylon is taken" "make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein." "It shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate." "So shall no man abide there" (Jer. 50:2, 3, 13, 40). "I will cause the noise of thy [Tyre's] songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard" (Eze. 26:13; cf. 26:3, 19, 21; 27:32, 34, 36; 28:19).
21. *Her punishment is appropriate to her crimes.* "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give	21. "I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands" (Jer. 25:14). "I will render unto Babylon . . . all their evil that they have done in Zion" (Jer. 51:24). "As she hath done, do unto her." "Recompense

her" (18:6, 7).	her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her" (Jer. 50:15, 29).
22. *Her accomplices lament her.* "The kings of the earth . . . shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas" (18:9, 10). "The merchants of the earth" "shall stand afar off for her the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas." "They cast dust on their heads." "And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!" (18:11, 15, 16, 19, 18).	22. "Howl for her [Babylon]" (Jer. 51:8). "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee [Babylon] from these things that shall come upon thee. . . . The fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. . . . Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants . . . : they shall wander every one to his quarter" (Isa. 47:13-15). "Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues" (Jer. 50:13). Compare Eze. 26:16, 17; 27:29-32, 36; 28:19.
23. *Her accomplices are destroyed.* "The cities of the nations fell" (16:19). "The beast . . . shall . . . go into perdition" (17:8; cf. v. 11). "These both [the beast and the false prophet] were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (19:20; cf. 20:10).	23. "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2; cf. Joel 3:2). "The Lord hath a controversy with the nations. . . . And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth" (Jer. 25:31, 33). "At Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth" (Jer. 51:49).

24. *A song of victory over Babylon.* "He . . . hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" (19:2; cf. 18:10). "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets" (18:20).	24. "This is the time of the Lord's vengeance [upon Babylon]; he will render unto her a recompence. "The Lord hath spoiled Babylon" (Jer. 51:6, 55; cf. Isa. 47:3; Jer. 50:15). "Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her" (Jer. 51:48; cf. Isa. 44:23; 49:13).

GOD'S WARNING TO HIS PEOPLE

25. *Come out of Babylon.* "Another angel" came "down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice" (18:1, 2). "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues (18:4).	25. "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon" (Zech. 2:7) "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity." "My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer. 51:6, 45; cf. Isa 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:9).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 COL 79; CS 52; CT 548; CW 141; EW 245; LS 327, 375; ML 59, 63; MM 185; TM 89; 5T 383, 729; 6T 41, 406; 7T 140; 9T 40, 46
1, 2 EW 277; GC 603; 6T 60
1–3LS 412
1–5TM 59
1–68T 118
1–24Ev 230; EW 273–276; GC 390; LS 412
2 EW 274; PP 124, 458; SR 399; TM 265; 4T 13
2, 3 Ev 365
2–4Ev 559; RC 51; 9T 110, 149
2–5PK 188
3 GC 653; TM 62
3, 4 Ev 247
4 CH 291; EW 92, 266; FE 502; GC 383, 390; PK 715; PP 167
4, 5 EW 277; GC 604; SR 399
5 EW 274

5, 6 COL 179; FE 363
5–10GC 653
6 EW 276
8 TM 62
13 EW 275; MH 338
5–17GC 653

CHAPTER 19

1 *God is praised in heaven for judging the great whore, and avenging the blood of his saints*. 7 *The marriage of the Lamb*. 10 *The angel will not be worshipped*. 17 *The fowls called to the great slaughter*.

1. After these things. That is, after witnessing the scenes of chs. 17 and 18 (see on ch. 18:1). Those of ch. 19 were presented to John immediately, without interruption. From v. 2 it is apparent that this song is sung after judgment has been executed upon the "great whore," an event that takes place under the seventh plague (see on chs. 16:19; 17:1), and thus after the scene described in chs. 17>17:16, 17; 18:4–23. According to TM 432 the singing of this song of praise to God follows immediately upon the completion of the work of the seventh plague-bearing angel. If the events of chs. 18 to 20 are recorded in chronological order, as appears to be the case, the anthem of ch. 19:1–7 is sung in close connection with events at the second coming of Christ, whether at that very time or just before or after cannot be determined with certainty. The context may be understood as assigning the anthem to a point of time immediately prior to the actual appearance of Christ (cf. v. 11).

A great voice. See on ch. 11:15.

Much people. The inhabitants of heaven, and possibly also men redeemed from this earth (cf. ch. 18:20). It may be that the anthem of ch. 19:1–7 is sung in response to the call of ch. 18:20.

Alleluia. Gr. *Allelouia*, a transliteration of the Heb. *halelu-Yah*, "praise ye Yahweh" (see on Ps. 104:35), from *halal*, "to shine," "to boast," "to celebrate," "to praise," and *Yah*, a shortened form of *Yahweh*. Like another Heb. word "amen," "hallelujah" has been adopted into the English language practically unchanged. The four occurrences of the word in Rev. 19 (vs. 1, 3, 4, 6) are the only instances of its use in the NT.

Verses 1–7 constitute an antiphonal choral arrangement composed of two anthems and two responses: (1) In vs. 1–3 a great voice in heaven leads out with the theme of the song, ascribing honor and justice to God for having punished Babylon. (2) In v. 4 the "beasts" and the "elders" respond in affirmation. (3) In v. 5 a voice from the throne summons all loyal subjects throughout the universe to a joint recognition of the truth of the theme. (4) In vs. 6, 7 the entire universe unites in acclaiming the right of God to universal sovereignty. This paean of praise stands in striking contrast with the dirge of death in ch. 18:10–19.

The motif of this antiphonal hymn of praise is similar to that Ps. 24:7–10, which is likewise composed of two anthems and two responses. This responsive chorus was first used during the triumphal procession marking the return of the ark to Jerusalem (PP 708), and centuries later at the resurrection (EW 187) and the ascension (DA 833; EW 190, 191).

Salvation. Literally, "the salvation." In the Greek each of the virtues here ascribed to God is preceded by the definite article. This suggests the fullness, the sum total, of each attribute. The "salvation" of ch. 12:10 (see on comment there) is specifically salvation from "the accuser of our brethren"; here, it is salvation from mystical Babylon (see on ch. 16:17). The one refers to what was accomplished at the first advent, the other, to what is to be accomplished at the second.

Glory. See on Matt. 6:13; Rom. 3:23.

Honour. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

Power. See on Matt. 6:13; 28:18.

The Lord. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this expression.

2. For. Verse 2 accounts for the ascription of praise in v. 1.

True. That is, genuine, real, dependable (see on ch. 15:3).

Righteous. Or, "just" (see on chs. 15:3; 16:1, 5). God will make no error in His acts of judgment. He will take all the facts into account.

Judgments. Literally, "[acts of] judging" (see on ch. 16:7), here, doubtless, the seven last plagues in general and the judgment of mystical Babylon in particular (see on chs. 17:1; 18:4, 10).

Hath judged. The Greek specifies a single, completed act.

Great whore. See on chs. 17:1, 5.

Did corrupt. Or, "was corrupting." Her criminal conduct covered a long period of time. See on ch. 17:2, 6.

Her fornication. See on ch. 17:2.

And hath avenged. Or, "in that he hath avenged." The judging is the avenging. See on ch. 18:6, 20.

Blood of his servants. See on chs. 6:9, 10; 16:6; 17:6.

3. Her smoke rose up. See on ch. 18:8, 9.

For ever and ever. See on ch. 14:11.

4. Elders. See on ch. 4:4.

Beasts. See on ch. 4:6–8.

Fell down. Compare ch. 4:10.

Sat on the throne. See on ch. 4:10.

Amen. See on Matt. 5:18.

5. Out of the throne. This was either the voice of God Himself or that of one speaking for Him (see on ch. 16:17).

Praise. Literally, "keep on praising." The response to this call is the chorus of voices of vs. 6, 7.

His servants. See on ch. 1:1.

And ye. Or, "even ye," "ye that fear," is equivalent to "ye his servants."

Fear. That is, in the sense of reverential awe (see on ch. 11:18).

Small and great. Compare ch. 11:18.

6. I heard. Compare on ch. 1:2.

As it were. Or, "what seemed to be."

Voice. See on ch. 14:2.

And as the voice. Rather, "even as the voice," in both instances where this expression occurs in v. 6.

Many waters. Compare ch. 14:2.

Alleluia. See on v. 1.

Omnipotent. Or, "Almighty" (see on 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8).

Reigneth. Literally, "reigned," in the sense that He "began to reign." It is at the close of the investigate judgment, but before Christ leaves the most holy place, that He receives His kingdom and begins His reign as "King of kings" (EW 280; GC 428; cf. EW 55).

7. Be glad. The inward experience of the heart.

Rejoice. The outward expression that results from the inward emotion of gladness. It comes from a heart overflowing with happiness that Christ is now reigning as king (cf. ch. 18:20).

Honour.Literally, "glory." This is the climatic expression of gratitude and devotion.

Marriage. "The bride, the Lamb's wife" is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem" (ch. 21:2, 9, 10). The New Jerusalem is to be the capital of the new earth, and as such is representative of "the kingdoms of this world," which are to "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (chs. 11:15; 21:1–5; GC 426). The New Jerusalem will contain the Garden of Eden, in which the tree of life has been preserved (see ch. 22:1, 2; cf. PP 62; GC 299, 646–648). The wedding here referred to consists of the reception by Christ of His kingdom, as represented by the New Jerusalem, and His coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords, in heaven at the close of His priestly ministry before the plagues are poured out (EW 55, 251, 280, 281; GC 427, 428; see on ch. 17:14). As in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the waiting saints are represented as guests invited to the wedding (ch. 19:9; GC 426, 427; cf. Matt. 25:1–10).

The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

Is come. Or, "has [finally] come," that is, the event has already taken place when this announcement is made (see above on "marriage"; cf. on v. 1).

Made herself ready. John continues his figurative account in terms of an ancient Oriental wedding. For comment on customs connected with such an occasion see on Matt. 22:1–13; 25:1–10; John 2:1–10.

8. To her was granted. John has set forth the New Jerusalem symbolically as the bride (see on v. 7). Continuing the figure, he speaks of the garments in which she is arrayed.

Fine linen. Here a figure for a righteous character (cf. chs. 3:5; 6:11; see on ch. 3:18; cf. on ch. 22:14).

Clean. Literally, "splendid," brilliant and shining like the light of a lamp. The same word is translated "gorgeous" in Luke 23:11, and "bright" in Rev. 22:16.

White. Literally, "pure."

Righteousness. Gr. *dikaiōmata*, "righteousness deeds," not *dikaiosunē*, "righteous character" (see on Matt. 5:6; Rom. 3:20). Righteous deeds are the natural and inevitable result of a righteous character. *Dikaiōmata* applies particularly to the sanctified deeds of the Christian, his victorious life developed by the grace of the indwelling Christ (see on Gal. 2:20; James 2:17, 18, 20). For comment on the wedding garment in the parable of the Man Without a Wedding Garment see on Matt. 22:11. Compare on Matt. 5:48; see COL 315–317.

9.He. That is, the angel of v. 10.

Write. See on ch. 1:2, 11.

Blessed. Or, "happy" (see on Matt. 5:3).

Called. That is, invited to the marriage feast (see on Matt. 22:14; Rom. 8:28).

Supper. Gr. *deipnon*, the evening meal. The "marriage supper of the Lamb" takes place at the end of earth's long day. See on Matt. 22:1–14.

The Lamb. See on ch. 5:6.

These. That is, the words of the invitation.

True sayings. Literally, "genuine [ones]." The invitation is absolutely trustworthy; it can be depended upon.

10. Fell. A typical Oriental gesture of reverence and worship. Here it is an expression of profound joy and gratitude, for the marriage supper is a celebration of triumph over the forces of evil, which have sought to prevent this very event. This is the first occasion on which John responded thus to the message of the angel, and represents the depth of feeling it stirred in him.

Do it not. Compare Acts 10:26.

Fellowservant. Literally, "fellow slave," "fellow bondsman." What a privilege it is that devoted workers on earth may share the companionship of, and be co-workers with, heavenly angels!

Of thy brethren. That is, a fellow servant of thy brethren. Some have considered this designation as evidence that the speaker must be a member of the human family, such as Enoch, Elijah, Moses, or one of the saints raised with Christ at His resurrection. However, there is no direct evidence in Scripture that a translated human being ever acted in the role of an angel, as here, to reveal truth to his fellow men (cf. EW 231).

The testimony of Jesus. See on chs. 1:2; 12:17.

Spirit of prophecy. For the word "prophecy," compare the word "prophet" in Matt. 11:9. The Holy Spirit was sent to bear testimony to Jesus (John 15:26), and His witness is equivalent to that of Jesus in person. The Spirit of prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit (see on 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11). For the manifestation of this gift among the people of God in the last days see Additional Note at end of chapter; see on ch. 12:17.

11. Opened. Literally, "standing open." Heaven was open when John's attention was first directed to it, and remained open. Compare chs. 4:1; 11:19; 15:5. Accompanied by the angel armies of heaven (ch. 19:14), Christ is seen descending from heaven as King of kings (v. 16) in power and majesty to deliver His faithful people from those who are bent upon their destruction (cf. GC 641). The scene described in vs. 11–21 is the climax of "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," often called the battle of Armageddon (see on ch. 16:12–19; cf. 6T 406).

Behold. Compare on ch. 21:5.

White horse. In Bible times horses were used almost exclusively in connection with warfare or government business. When used figuratively in the Bible, as here, the horse is usually a symbol of battle (cf. Ex. 15:21; Isa. 43:17; Jer. 8:6; Eze. 38:15; Zech. 10:3; Rev. 14:20; see on ch. 6:2). White typifies holiness of character (see on chs. 3:4; 6:2; 7:14). White horses have ever been the favorite of kings and military leaders. Christ has received the right to rule this earth as King of kings (see on ch. 19:1, 7) and now appears, figuratively, as a warrior, riding forth as a conqueror on a magnificent white charger to occupy His lawful domain and to escort His faithful people back to the "marriage supper" (v. 9; see on ch. 11:15). Compare Isa. 63:1–6.

Faithful and True. It should be remembered that Oriental names depict character (see on Acts 3:16), and that therefore the names here ascribed to Christ specifically represent Him in His role as champion of His beleaguered people on earth. Four

statements are made concerning Christ's name in connection with the battle of Rev. 19:11–21:

1. Christ is called "Faithful and True" (v. 11) in that He now appears, according to His promise (John 14:1–3), to deliver His own. To them He has seemed to delay His coming (see on Rev. 16:15), but they "have waited for him," and He now appears for the purpose of effecting their salvation (Isa. 25:9; cf. Rev. 16:17).
2. The "name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (v. 12) represents the heretofore unknown role in which He now appears, as the avenger of His people (see on ch. 16:1). In the performance of this "strange" work (Isa. 28:21) He acts in a role new to both men and angels.
3. But as the avenger and deliverer of His people He is still "The Word of God" (v. 13). He is "The Word of God" at work carrying out the will of the Father on earth, now in judgment, as formerly in mercy (see on John 1:1–3; Rev. 19:15).
4. The title "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (v. 16) applies in a special sense to Christ at this time (see on ch. 17:14). All power has been given into His hands (1 Cor. 15:25). Satan selfishly aspired to the exalted position that had been reserved for Christ as the Son of God (Isa. 14:12–14; Rev. 12:7–9; PP 36). But the latter, not counting equality with the Father a thing to be grasped, had voluntarily relinquished the full exercise of the attributes and prerogatives of Deity for a time (see on Vol. V, p. 918; see on Phil. 2:6-8), and thereby demonstrated His worthiness to receive the honor and dignity implicit in the title "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

In righteousness. His cause is altogether just (see on chs. 15:3; 16:5). Throughout history earthly rulers have waged war for selfish ends and personal or national aggrandizement. Compare Isa. 11:1–5.

Doth judge and make war. He executes judgment by waging war. This war is against the political and military forces of earth, which had assembled to destroy His faithful servants (see on chs. 13:15; 16:13, 14, 16, 17).

12. His eyes. See on ch. 1:14. As Christ goes forth, the great champion of eternal justice, nothing escapes His notice.

Crowns. Gr. *diadēma* (see on ch. 12:3). In the Bible *diadēma* is never applied to the reward of the saints. It is always the crown of royalty. In addition to the many royal crowns that Christ receives as King of kings, He also wears the chaplet of victory, the *stephanos*, since He too overcame Satan (see on ch. 12:3; 14:14).

A name. See on v. 11; cf. on ch. 2:17.

13. Vesture. Gr. *himation* (see on Matt. 5:40), here perhaps a rider's coat, or the cloak of a military commander.

Dipped in blood. Figuratively, of course. The question arises as to whose blood stains the cloak of the rider. Some have suggested that it is a symbol of Christ's own blood shed on the cross, on the assumption that it cannot be that of the wicked, who, at this point in the narrative, have not yet been slain. However, Christ here appears, not in the role of "a Lamb as it had been slain" (ch. 5:6), but of a conquering warrior. The striking similarity between this passage and that of Isaiah (ch. 63:1–6) suggests that this passage is a fulfillment of the words of Isaiah.

His name. See on v. 11.

Word of God. See on John 1:1. In executing divine justice on those who persist in rebellion against the government of heaven, Christ is as truly the "Word of God" as when, at His first advent, He came to earth with the gracious offer of divine mercy. His coming on both occasions is an expression of the divine will.

14. Armies. That is, the angelic hosts that accompany Christ at His second advent (see Matt. 24:31; 25:31). See on Rev. 17:14; cf. Matt. 22:7.

15. Out of his mouth. The sword is obviously figurative. By the word of the Lord the earth and its inhabitants were brought into being (Ps. 33:6, 9), and now, by the word of His mouth, He terminates their existence (see Rev. 19:20, 21).

Sword. Gr. *rhomphaia* (see on ch. 1:16), the large weapon of assault used by soldiers of ancient times, in contrast with the *machaira*, the short stabbing sword used in defense (see on Luke 22:36). Compare Jer. 46:10.

Smite. Literally, "smite [once for all]."

Rule. Gr. *poimainō*, literally, "to shepherd" (see on Matt. 2:6). The expression "and shall rule them" may better be translated, "that is, shall rule them," for the smiting and the ruling refer to the same thing.

Rod of iron. See on Rev. 2:27; cf. Ps. 2:9; 110:1, 2, 5, 6. The ancient shepherd's rod had a double function. The crook on one end served to help and guide the sheep, while the heavy ferrule on the other end, a metal cap or ring to strengthen the rod, made it also a weapon of assault. This was used for the protection of the flock, to repel and kill wild animals that would scatter and destroy it. It is now time for the Good Shepherd to use the "rod of iron" against the nations for the deliverance of His beleaguered flock on earth. His ruling, or smiting the nations, with a rod of iron results in their extermination, not their government during the millennium, as some hold (see Additional Notes on Chapter 20, Note 2).

Winepress. See on Isa. 63:3; Rev. 14:19, 20, where the same figure is developed further. Compare Lam. 1:15.

Of the fierceness and wrath. Rather, "which is the fury of the anger." See on ch. 16:1.

Almighty. See on ch. 1:8.

16. Vesture. See on v. 13.

And on his thigh. Preferably, "that is, upon his thigh." The name was seen inscribed on the part of his cloak that covered the thigh.

A name. See on v. 11.

King of kings. See on ch. 17:14; cf. on ch. 19:6.

17. Standing in the sun. Perhaps the blinding light of the sun is here descriptive of the glorious light of the divine presence (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8, 9; Rev. 6:15–17). Thus the angel who issues the challenge of ch. 19:17 would be standing next to Christ, as in ancient combat an armor-bearer would be near his lord.

Fowls. This invitation to the "fowls" warns the assembled hosts of the wicked as to the fate that impends for them (see on ch. 16:15–17). It is couched in the graphic Oriental phraseology of a challenge to personal combat (cf. 1 Sam. 17:44–46). To be devoured by the scavengers of the skies constituted one of the curses for disobedience pronounced by Moses in his valedictory address to the people of Israel (Deut. 28:26). John's phraseology

in Rev. 19:17, 18 appears to be based on God's words to the heathen nations of earth as recorded in Eze. 39:17–22 (cf. Jer. 7:32, 33).

Supper. The gruesome alternative to eating at the marriage supper of the Lamb (v. 9) is to be eaten by the fowls of heaven at the "supper of the great God." Those who do not voluntarily accept God's gracious invitation to be present at the one must respond to His imperative summons to the other.

18. Flesh. Literally, "flesh pieces" (cf. on ch. 17:16).

Kings. The confederate nations of earth, acting in concert under the direct supervision of Satan in the guise of an angel of light (cf. on chs. 16:14, 16, 17; 17:12, 14).

Captains. The leaders in command of the military forces assembled to carry out Satan's will in the closing scenes of the great controversy.

Mighty men. Armed forces organized, trained, and equipped.

Flesh of horses. The remainder of v. 18 is a graphic word picture of the total destruction of all the forces of evil at the second coming of Christ (cf. chs. 6:15; 14:17–20; 16:21).

Free and bond. Compare ch. 13:16.

19. The beast. See on ch. 17:3, 8, 11.

Kings of the earth. See on chs. 16:14, 16; 17:12–14.

Their armies. Now assembled for battle and engaged in bitter conflict among themselves (see on ch. 16:17, 19).

Gathered together. See on ch. 16:14, 16.

War. Literally, "the war," that is, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," often called the battle of Armageddon (see on ch. 16:14).

Him that sat. See on v. 11.

His army. Compare "they that are with him" (ch. 17:14; cf. on chs. 16:12; 19:14).

20. The beast. See on ch. 17:3, 8.

Taken. Or, "captured." The phrase of the battle following Christ's appearance is short and dramatic, for at its very outset the "beast" and the "false prophet" are captured (see on ch. 16:17, 19).

False prophet. That is, apostate Protestantism, which is deluded by Satan and cooperates with him (see on chs. 13:11–17; 16:14). A "prophet" is one who speaks on behalf of another (see on Matt. 11:9). This "prophet" speaks on behalf of the first beast, in connection with the healing of its "deadly wound" (see on chs. 13:12; 17:8), to persuade the world to unite in allegiance to it.

Miracles … deceived. See on chs. 13:13, 14; 16:14; 17:2; 18:2, 3, 23.

Mark of the best. See on ch. 13:16; cf. chs. 14:9; 16:1.

Image. See on chs. 13:14; 14:9.

A lake of fire. Or, "the lake which is fire." This phrase immediately turns the reader's mind to an identical phrase in ch. 20:10, which in turn seems to call for the conclusion that these phrases refer to the same fiery event, namely, the destruction of the wicked at the end of the thousand years. But to do so presents a problem. The 19th chapter is most evidently discussing events in connection with the second coming of Christ. Hence to hold that the lake of fire mentioned in ch. 19:20 describes an event at the close of the millennium is to lift this verse out of its contextual sequence. It is always better, if possible, to find an explanation that allows any given statement to maintain its historical sequence in a passage of Scripture. As regards ch. 19:20, this is possible on the

reasonable premise that there is a fiery judgment from God both at the beginning and at the close of the millennium. There is no inconsistency and certainly no contradiction in speaking of a lake of fire at the beginning and a lake of fire at the end of the millennium.

James White wrote thus on this point: "So, if you please, there are two lakes of fire, one at each end of the one thousand years" (RH Jan. 21, 1862).

21. The remnant. Or, "the rest," that is, all of earth's inhabitants except the redeemed (see Additional Notes on Chapter 20, Note 2).

Sword. See on v. 15.

Him that sat. See on v. 11.

All the fowls. See on v. 17.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 19

[7]

In ch. 12:17 John speaks of "the testimony of Jesus" which is "the spirit of prophecy" as one of the identifying marks of the "remnant" (see comment there).

The word "prophecy" describes any inspired message communicated by God through a prophet (see on Matt. 11:9). Prophecy may be a prediction of future events, though more commonly it is not. The expression "spirit of prophecy" refers specifically to the "manifestation of the Spirit" in the form of a special gift of the Holy Spirit that inspires the recipient and enables him to speak authoritatively as a representative of God (1 Cor. 12:7–10). when "moved by the Holy Ghost" to do so (2 Peter 1:21). The context of the expression in Rev. 19:10 defines "the testimony of Jesus" and "the spirit of prophecy" in this sense. In view of the fact that the "remnant" of ch. 12:17 specifically refers to the church after the close of the 1260 prophetic days of vs. 6 and 14, that is, after 1798 (see on Dan. 7:25), ch. 12:17 stands as a clear prediction of the special manifestation of the "spirit," or "gift," of prophecy in the church in our day. Seventh-day Adventists believe the ministry of Ellen G. White meets the specifications of Rev. 12:17 in a unique way.

The Bible writers refer to more than 20 of their contemporaries who exercised the gift of prophecy, though their messages were not incorporated into the canon. Such were Nathan, Gad, Iddo, Agabus, and others (2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 29:9; 2 Chron. 9:29; Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10). It is evident, furthermore, that the gift of prophecy was not limited to men, either in OT or in NT times, for there were prophetesses such as Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Chron. 34:22), and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9).

New Testament writers nowhere suggest that the gift of prophecy was to end with the apostolic church. On the contrary, Paul declares that, with the other gifts of the Spirit he lists in Eph. 4:11, it was to continue "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13). All of the other special gifts mentioned in v. 11 are still needed in the church, and men and women are still qualified by the Holy Spirit to fill these offices. Why should the office of prophet be considered an exception?

There have ever been counterfeit manifestations of the prophetic gift. Not only was this so in OT times (see Chron. 18; Jer. 27–29), but our Lord warned that the Christian church would be troubled by false prophets, particularly as the time for His second

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[7]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 18:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

advent should draw near (Matt. 24:11, 24). The deceptive power of these false prophets was to be so great that if it were possible they would "deceive the very elect." The fact that Christ warned against a false manifestation of the prophetic gift prior to His second coming argues strongly that there would also be a genuine manifestation of this gift, as otherwise He could simply have warned against any and all prophets who might arise.

In harmony with Christ's warning John counsels the church to test those who claim to have been entrusted with spiritual gifts (1 John 4:1), to determine whether these gifts are genuine. The Scriptures specify certain standards by which those who profess to speak for God are to be measured: (1) The personal life of the prophet will be in harmony with the teachings of Scripture (Matt. 7:15–20). (2) His messages will likewise accord with Scripture. (3) His ministry will exalt Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of men (1 John 4:2). (4) His ministry will be confirmed by fulfilled predictions (Jer. 28:9; cf. 1 Sam. 3:19). It is reasonable also to expect that the messages he bears will be of practical benefit to the church, that they will be timely and appropriate, that they will be free from human influence, and that when he is in open vision his experience will be similar to that of the Bible prophets. The life, ministry, and writings of Ellen G. White fully meet these various requirements.

Seventh-day Adventists do not consider the writings of Ellen G. White as either a substitute for or an addition to the Sacred Canon. For Adventists, the Bible stands unique and supreme as the test of Christian faith and practice (see EW 78), while the writings of Ellen G. White serve, in her own words, as "a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (EGW RH Jan. 20, 1903). The writings of the Spirit of prophecy do not present a new way of salvation, but are designed to lead men to understand and appreciate the Bible, and to avail themselves of the fount of salvation therein revealed.

Some have speculated that there are degrees of inspiration. Accordingly, they consider such prophets, for example, as Deborah, Nathan, and Agabus, as possessing a lower, or inferior, kind of inspiration than the canonical writers. On the same premises they would consider Ellen G. White as possessing a lower, or inferior, kind of inspiration. But the Bible says nothing about degrees of inspiration, nor does it lend any support to the idea. Adventists believe that all such speculation is not only idle but dangerous. How can finite minds hope to understand the mystery of how God, through the Spirit, uniquely illumines the minds of His chosen spokesmen?

For a discussion of certain questions raised regarding Mrs. White see F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–6TM 432
6 DA 48; GC 673
6, 7 DA 151; PK 721
6–9COL 421
7, 8 8T 154
8 AA 591; AH 536; COL 310; CG 190; Ed 249; ML 272
8, 9 CT 341
9 AH 503; DA 151; EW 19; GC 427; ML 356; TM 19; 1T 69; 6T 412; 7T 54; 8T 153
10 EW 231; ML 41; PP 367
11 GC 641
14 AA 523; GC 641

16 DA 739; EW 179, 286; GC 641; MB 108; SR 410; 6T 406

CHAPTER 20

2 *Satan bound for a thousand years*. 6 *The first resurrection: they blessed that have part therein*. 7 *Satan let loose again*. 8 *Gog and Magog*. 10 *The devil cast into the lake of fire and brimstone*. 12 *The last and general resurrection*.

1. I saw. The events described in ch. 20 follow immediately upon those portrayed in ch. 19.

Come down. Literally, "coming down." John saw the angel not already on the earth, but in the act of descending.

Key. The fact that an angel carries the key shows that Heaven has complete control of events. The dragon will be unable to avoid being cast into the pit.

Bottomless pit. Gr. *abussos* (see on ch. 9:1). This is a symbolic vision. The bottomless pit is not some subterranean cavern or some yawning chasm elsewhere in the universe. John is describing the prophetic picture that unfolded before his wondering eyes. In vision he saw an actual pit, but the shutting up of the dragon in the pit was merely a symbolic way of showing that Satan's activities would be brought to a halt. This is made clear by the statement showing the purpose of his confinement, "that he should deceive the nations no more" (ch. 20:3).

How Satan's activities will be brought to a halt is clear from the context and from other scriptures, which show that the earth will be utterly depopulated at the second coming of Christ. According to ch. 19:19–21 the wicked are all destroyed in connection with the coming (see comment there). At the same time the righteous are "caught up … in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). Paul's language shows that at His second coming Christ does not establish His kingdom on earth; else why would He remove the saints from the earth? Its establishment takes place after the close of the millennium, when the New Jerusalem comes down (Rev. 21:1–3). That Jesus removes the saints from the earth at His coming is further implied in John 14:1–3. In comforting His disciples in their sorrow concerning His departure, Jesus informed them that He was going to His Father's house, where He would prepare dwellings for them. Then He would return and take them to be with Him. Compare John 13:36; 17:24. The dwellings are doubtless in the New Jerusalem, which is not transferred to this earth until the close of the millennium (see on Rev. 21:1–3).

The group that is caught up to meet the Lord in the air includes both the righteous dead, who are raised at the time of the advent, and the righteous living, who are "changed" (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). The company of resurrected saints thus includes all the righteous who have ever lived upon the earth. There are but two main resurrections, the "resurrection of life" and the "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29; Acts 24:15). At these resurrections, "all that are in the grave … shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29). Some have insisted that the phrase "dead in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16) includes only the Christians who have died, and that the OT saints are not included. But the above scriptures show that all the righteous come forth in the resurrection of the just. The phrase "dead in Christ" need not exclude the OT saints, for they died with their hope fixed on a Messiah to come. Their resurrection is dependent upon the resurrection of Christ, for only "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). The resurrection of the righteous is further described as the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5, 6).

Much confusion has been brought into the millennial doctrine by those who fail to recognize that promises to ancient Israel were conditional on obedience. Many fanciful theories are advanced by those who attempt to fit a fulfillment of these ancient promises into the eschatological picture of the NT. This is more than the NT writers attempt. Inspired by the Spirit of God, they present a consistent picture of last day events. They show how events that might have met a different fulfillment had the Jewish nation accepted their divine destiny, will be fulfilled with respect to the NT church. They show the true position of the Jew in NT times and accord no special place to the Jews as a nation. In one of His parables Jesus clearly revealed that when the Jewish nation rejected Christ "the kingdom of God" was taken from them "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (see on Matt. 21:43). The Jew now stands in the same relationship to God as the Gentile (see on Rom. 11). For an extended discussion of the role of the Jews in Bible prophecy and of the conditional nature of the prophecies made concerning them see Vol. IV, pp. 25–38. A careful survey of all the evidence shows that the Jews as a nation play no special role in millennial events. As individuals, those who through the centuries of the Christian Era have accepted Jesus Christ are saved as members of the Christian church. Along with other saints they rise in the first resurrection and are translated. Those who persist in their rejection of the Messiah rise in the second resurrection (see on Rev. 20:5).

The removal of all the saints to heaven and the destruction of all the living wicked (see above) leave the earth totally depopulated. Furthermore, the fearful convulsions of nature connected with the seven last plagues (see on ch. 16:18–21) leave the earth a scene of utter desolation. Dead bodies lie strewn over its surface (see on ch. 19:17–21). It is not unreasonable to see in the *abussos* a symbol of the desolated earth to which Satan will be confined during the millennium. In the LXX of Gen. 1:2 *abussos* translates the Heb. *tehom*, "deep," the word that describes the surface of the earth as it appeared on the first day of creation, "without form, and void."

Chain. A symbol of restraint. No literal binding with a literal chain is here prefigured.

In his hand. Or, "upon his hand," perhaps indicating that the chain was hanging from the angel's hand.

2. Laid hold. Gr. *krateō*, "to seize," "to hold fast."

Dragon … Satan. This refers back to ch. 12:9, where the same list of names appears (see comment there).

Bound. The binding of the dragon is symbolic of the restrictions placed upon Satan's activities. The wicked will have been slain at the second coming of Christ. The righteous will have been transported to heaven. Satan and his evil angels will be confined to the desolated earth; so there will be not even one member of the human race left alive on earth upon whom Satan can exercise his deceptive powers. It is in this that his binding will consist (see on v. 1).

Thousand years. Some commentators take this to be prophetic time, that is, 360,000 literal years, basing their interpretation on the fact that these verses are symbolic, and that therefore the time period must be symbolically interpreted. Others point out that this prophecy contains a mixture of literal elements, and that therefore it is not necessary to understand the expression symbolically. This commentary takes the position that the thousand years are literal.

3. Bottomless pit. See on v. 1.

Set a seal. Gr. *sphragizō*, "to seal." For the function of ancient seals see on ch. 7:2. The present seal may be compared with that placed on the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 27:66). The sealing symbolizes that Satan will be effectively restrained for the period indicated.

Deceive the nations. Satan's work of deception will be cut short by the depopulation of the earth. There will be no one whom he can deceive (see on v. 1).

Must. Gr. *dei* "it is necessary." *Dei* suggests necessity based upon moral and ethical reasons. Here it is a necessity because God wills that it shall be so, as a part of His divine plan.

Loosed. This represents the reverse of the binding of the devil at the second coming of Christ. Satan is again to be in the position to deceive men, to work his will with them in opposition to God. It was the depopulation of the earth that terminated his deceptive work. His loosing will therefore be accomplished by a repopulation of the earth, an event brought about by the resurrection of the wicked at the close of the thousand years (see on v. 5). These newly resurrected ones will be subject to his deceptions as he plans his final test of strength with Jehovah.

A little season. Or, "a little time." How long this "little" time will be, we are not informed. It will be time enough for Satan to organize the resurrected wicked for an assault upon the New Jerusalem.

4. Thrones. Symbols of authority to exercise rule as a king (ch. 13:2), or as a judge (Matt. 19:28).

Sat. Or, "took their seats."

Judgment. Gr. *krima* "sentence," "verdict," "a decision rendered." Here *krima* seems to mean the authority to pass sentence. The passage does not refer to a verdict in favor of the righteous. The saints sit upon thrones, which fact indicates that they are the ones who will pronounce sentence. The passage is doubtless an allusion to Dan. 7:22, where the prophet notes that "judgment was given to the saints of the most High." For "judgment" the LXX of Daniel reads *krisis*, "the act of judging," whereas Theodotion's Greek version reads *krima*.

The work of judgment referred to by the revelator is doubtless that spoken of by Paul: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? … Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). The work of judgment will doubtless involve a careful investigation of the records of evil men, so that every man will be convinced of the justice of God in the destruction of the wicked (see DA 58). See GC 660, 661.

Souls. See on Rev. 6:9; cf. on Ps. 16:10.

Beheaded. Gr. *pelekizō*, literally, "to cut off with an ax," specifically, "to behead." The word comes from *pelekus*, "an ax." The ax was the usual instrument used in executions in ancient Rome. Later it was replaced by the sword.

Witness of Jesus. Or, "testimony of Jesus" (see on ch. 1:2, 9), here, the witness borne about Jesus.

Word of God. See on ch. 1:2, 9.

Which had not worshipped. In other words, they heeded the warning of the third angel (ch. 14:9–12) and refused to render obeisance to the power represented by the beast, even though threatened with boycott and death (see on ch. 13:15–17). Only two

classes of saints are mentioned in this verse, martyrs and victors over the beast. This does not mean that they are the only ones to share in the millennial reign, for it has already been shown that all the righteous dead (not only the martyrs) come forth in the first resurrection (see on Rev. 20:1; cf. on Dan. 12:2). Perhaps the martyrs and the victors over the beast are singled out because they represent those who have suffered most. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

Lived. The Greek may be translated either "lived" or "came to life." The context seems to favor the latter translation, otherwise the declaration, "This is the first resurrection" (v. 5) is without proper antecedent. However, the victors over the beast are alive in the time immediately preceding the coming of the Son of man, and the majority, if not all, will require no resurrection (see on v. 1) Hence, some suggest that "lived" should be given the ingressive idea, and "and" be understood as an explanatory term thus: "They began to live, that is, to reign with Christ."

Reigned. The question is raised, over whom will the saints reign if all the wicked have been destroyed? They are said to reign "with Christ." When the seventh angel sounds, "the kingdoms of this world … become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (ch. 11:15). Daniel speaks of the "kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom" being "given to the people of the saints of the most High" (ch. 7:27). The saints have been under the oppressive rule of kings who had drunk of the wine of Babylon's fornication (see Rev. 18:3). Now the tables have been turned.

True, the wicked are dead (see on ch. 20:2), but they will return to life at the end of the millennial period (see on v. 5). They are shut up, as it were, later to receive their punishment. In the meantime the saints assist in the work of judgment that determines the punishment to be meted out. After the wicked return to life they go down in utter defeat, receive their punishment, and are annihilated (see on chs. 14:10; 20:9).

With Christ. The millennial reign is with Christ in heaven, not on earth as many Bible interpreters assert (see on v. 2; see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2).

Thousand years. See on v. 2.

5. Rest of the dead. This obviously refers to the wicked dead, those who from the beginning of time have gone into Christless graves and those who have perished at the second coming of Christ. This is clear from the fact that all the righteous dead arose in the first resurrection. Therefore "the rest of the dead" must refer to the wicked dead (see on v. 2).

Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the sentence, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," though it is generally held that the preponderance of evidence is in favor of retaining it. The doctrine of the second resurrection is not, however, dependent upon this statement. It is clearly implied in the chapter. If the nations are to join Satan in his assault upon the Holy City (v. 9), they must be brought back to life. The term "second resurrection" is derived from the observation that there are only two main resurrections (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) and that the resurrection of the righteous is called the "first resurrection" (see on Rev. 20:2, 4).

The passage, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," is parenthetical. The sentence that follows, "This is the first resurrection," is connected directly with the resurrection referred to in v. 4.

For a discussion of the textual aspects of the problem of v. 5 see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

Lived not. Rather, "came not to life" (see on v. 4).

Were finished. The phrase may literally be translated, "until shall have been completed."

First resurrection. That is, the one mentioned in v. 4 (see comment there).

6. Blessed. Gr. *makarios* (see on Matt. 5:3).

Holy. Gr. *hagios* (see on Rom. 1:7).

Second death. This is, the death that comes to the wicked after their resurrection at the close of the 1000 years (v. 14; ch. 21:8). The first death is the death that comes to all (1 Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:27). All, both the righteous and the wicked, are raised from this death (John 5:28, 29). The righteous come forth from their graves immortal (1 Cor. 15:52–55). The wicked are raised to receive their punishment and to die an eternal death (Rev. 20:9; 21:8). God destroys them, both body and soul, in hell (Matt. 10:28). This means annihilation. The "second death" is the exact opposite of an endless life under torture, which some teach will be the fate of the wicked (see on Matt. 25:41).

Power. Gr. *exousia*, "authority." The second death will not touch the redeemed.

Priests. See on Rev. 1:6; cf. Isa. 61:6.

Of God. That is, in company with God. In the same way, "of Christ" means in company with Christ. Or, the expressions "of God" and "of Christ" may signify respective, serving God and serving Christ.

Reign. See on v. 4; see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

7. Loosed. The confinement resulted from the removal of the righteous to heaven and the slaying of the living wicked (see on v. 2). The loosing will be accomplished by the resurrection of the wicked, which will provide Satan with subjects upon whom to practice his deceptive guile.

Prison. The prison is the "bottomless pit," the earth desolated at the second coming of Christ, where Satan had been confined during the 1000 years (see on v. 1). Satan is to be free to organize the resurrected wicked. This will be his final attempt against God before his destruction.

8. Nations … Gog and Magog. These terms represent the hosts of the unsaved of all ages who come forth in the second resurrection. For a discussion of the names "Gog" and "Magog" and the application of these symbols in OT prophecy and in the present passage see on Eze. 38:1, 2.

To battle. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "for the battle." The definite article lays stress on a particular battle, the last conflict between God and those in rebellion against Him. See GC 663–665.

Sand of the sea. That is, beyond computation (cf. Gen. 22:17). This host is composed of all the unsaved from the foundation of the world.

9. Breadth of the earth. Compare a similar expression in Hab. 1:6. The wicked, under the leadership of Satan, march against the camp of the righteous.

Compassed. That is, "encircled."

Camp. Gr. *parembolē*, "camp," a compound of *para*, "beside," and *ballo*, "to put," "to place," "to cast." *Parembolē* is used of a soldiers' barracks or fort (Acts 21:34, 37), of

armies in battle array (Heb. 11:34), of an encampment of people (Heb. 13:11, 13). Here *parembolē* describes the New Jerusalem.

And the beloved city. Or, "even the beloved city." The beloved city is the New Jerusalem (ch. 21:10). Some scholars distinguish between the camp and the city. This much seems clear, however, that the saints are inside the city during the siege (see EW 292, 293). The fact that the "beloved city" is being surrounded shows clearly that it has descended, although the actual descent is not described until ch. 21:1, 9, 10. One of the significant events following the close of the 1000 years is the descent of Christ, the saints, and the Holy City. The narrative is told with extreme brevity, but the sequence of events is clear when the entire context is examined.

Fire. This doubtless refers to literal fire as the means of destruction.

Devoured. Literally, "ate down." The form of the Greek verb denotes action completed. The wicked are annihilated. They suffer the "second death" (see on v. 6). There is no hint here of endless torture in an ever-burning hell (cf. Jude 7).

10. Lake of fire. See on ch. 19:20. Here the lake of fire is the surface of the earth turned into a sea of flames, which both consumes the wicked and purifies the earth.

Are. This word is supplied. The context suggests supplying the words "were cast." See on ch. 19:20.

Shall be tormented. The Greek verb is in the plural. The subject of the verb is the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. It should be noted that the beast and the false prophet are not literal but symbolic creatures.

For ever and ever. Literally, "unto the ages of the ages" (see on ch. 14:11).

11. Throne. A symbol of authority, in this case authority to carry out a judgment. The throne is "white," suggesting probably the purity and justness of the decisions arrived at. It is also described as "great," perhaps with reference to the momentous decisions arrived at.

Him that sat. The identity of the person seated on the throne is not stated, unless the phrase "before God" (v. 12) gives his identity. However, textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "before the throne" in place of "before God." Hence the identity remains uncertain.

The Scriptures present both Christ (Rom. 14:10) and the Father (Heb. 12:23) as sitting in judgment. In Rev. 4:2, 8, 9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5 it is the Father who is seated on the throne, as the divine judge. The two work in closest unity (see on John 10:30). The official acts of one become the official acts of the other. Here it is doubtless Christ who leads out (see GC 666).

Fled away. An indication of the absolute power of the One sitting upon the throne and of the transitory existence of this present world (Ps. 102:25, 26; 104:29, 30; Isa. 51:6; Mark 13:31; 2 Peter 3:10). The eternal order of things is to be of an entirely new kind (Rev. 21:1–5).

12. The dead. This obviously refers to those raised in the second resurrection (see on vs. 5, 7).

Small and great. Station in life has no weight in this meeting with God. Many of high position in the world escaped, while alive, the fitting reward for their evil deeds. In this final accounting with God there will be no evasion of full justice.

Before God. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "before the throne" (see on v. 11).

The books. Literally, "books." The Greek has no definite article. These are the books containing the record of the lives of men. No sentence passed upon any wicked person will be arbitrary, biased, or unfair. For a classification of these books see on Dan. 7:10.

Another book. That is, "one more book."

Book of life. See on Phil. 4:3; cf. on Luke 10:20.

According to their works. See on Rom. 2:6. The evidence that stands open for all to see and evaluate.

13. Sea … death … hell. These words set forth the universality of the second resurrection implied in v. 12. No man can avoid appearing in person before God on His throne. Death and hell are found together in chs. 1:18; 6:8. For a definition of "hell" see on Matt. 11:23.

14. Death and hell. Death and hell are here personified. Their being cast into the lake of fire represents an end of death and of the abode of the dead. Never will they have part in the new earth; they are mortal phenomena that belong only to this world. Death is the final enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26, 53–55).

Lake of fire. See on v. 10.

Second death. See on v. 6.

15. Whosoever. Only the names of the faithful will be retained in the book of life. The names of those who do not endure until the end will be blotted out (ch. 3:5). Many never had their names recorded there, for the book contains only the names of those who at some time in their lives professed faith in Christ (see on Luke 10:20).

Lake of fire. See on v. 10. Compare Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 21:8.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 20

Note 1

Rev. 20:5 presents a certain textual problem. The clause, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," is not found in certain manuscripts. This has raised a question as to the genuineness of this passage. Following is an examination of the textual evidence that bears on this problem.

There are six principal uncial witnesses for the book of Revelation: (1) the Chester Beatty Papyri from the 3d century, designated P, our oldest substantial witness to the book, and a few papyrus fragments, (2) the Sinaiticus (designated א) from the 4th century, (3) the Alexandrinus (designated *A*) from the 5th century, (4) the Ephraemi Rescriptus (designated *C*) from the 5th century, (5) the Porfirianus (designated *P*) from the 9th or 10th century, and (6) a Vatican manuscript sometimes designated *B,* but to be distinguished from the Codex Vaticanus of the 4th century consistently designated *B*. The book of Revelation has been lost from the Codex Vaticanus, so the deficiency has been supplied by substituting an 8th-century manuscript variously designated, Vatican gr. 2066, *046,* or *a* 1070.

Besides these uncial witnesses are a host of minuscule manuscripts of comparatively late date.

It should be noted that these ancient manuscripts are not all complete. Some of the leaves are entirely missing and others have become mutilated. Sometimes whole sections are missing. For example, as just noted, the whole of the book of Revelation has been lost from the Codex Vaticanus. The Chester Beatty Papyri of Revelation contain only the section from chs. 9:10 to 17:2, with certain lines missing in the extant leaves. The witness of these important uncials as far as ch. 20:5 is concerned is therefore unknown. The same

is true of the witness of Ephraemi Rescriptus (*C*) and that of Porfirianus (*P*), for the entire twentieth chapter is missing form *C,* and the first nine verses of the chapter from *P*. This section of Revelation is also missing from certain minuscules.

The Peshitta version—early 5th century—never contained the books of 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, or the Revelation, because the Syrian church did not recognize them as canonical. The text of the Revelation appearing in modern printed editions of the Peshitta since 1627 was borrowed from a later Syriac translation known as the Harkleian.

Therefore, the genuineness of the clause in question must be evaluated on the basis of the remaining witnesses, which are comparatively few in number. In fact, the ancient witnesses to the book of Revelation are much fewer in number than those of the Gospels, Acts, or Pauline epistles.

Of those manuscripts that contain this section of Revelation the clause, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," is omitted in the Sinaiticus (א), a number of minuscules, and the Syriac versions. It is found in the Alexandrinus (*A*) and in *046,* and in a large number of minuscules. The process whereby the genuineness of a reading is determined is too complex to be here discussed, but on the basis of the evidence available scholars generally accept, as genuine, the clause here under discussion. For this reason it appears in the majority of the translations. The fact that some translators place the passage in parentheses does not mean that they necessarily doubt the genuineness of the reading; they may simply regard it as parenthetical.

It is pointed out that the entire passage reads along coherently if the clause in question is omitted, especially if the last part of v. 4 is translated, "they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years," which translation the syntax of the Greek permits. However, such a consideration alone is not the basis for deciding the genuineness of a particular passage. An author must not be denied the privilege of introducing a parenthetical idea into an otherwise smoothly flowing line of thought.

There is no contextual problem in the disputed clause, for what is said in this clause is clearly implied in the context, especially when related scriptures are studied. The Bible speaks of two main resurrections—that of the just, and that of the unjust (see John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15). That of the just is clearly set forth as occurring in connection with the second coming of Christ (see 1 Thess. 4:13–17). In Rev. 20:4 the statement is made concerning certain classes that they "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This clause should be translated as noted above, "they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Thus translated, the clause "this is the first resurrection" (v. 5) connects logically with v. 4. When the author calls this the "first" resurrection, he clearly implies a "second." Since the wicked are all slain at the second coming of Christ (ch. 19:21), and since they are represented as attacking the city at the end of the millennium (ch. 20:8, 9), it follows that they must have been raised. Thus the second resurrection at the end of the thousand years is clearly implied in the context.

Note 2

The thousand-year period commonly called the millennium is mentioned in the Bible only in Rev. 20. The word "millennium," which means simply, "thousand years," is not a scriptural term, but the expression "thousand years" occurs six times in vs. 1–7. Commentators differ widely in their understanding of the millennium.

This Additional Note proposes to set forth Bible reasons for the position held by Seventh-day Adventists and to show why Adventists regard as untenable certain other positions that have been advanced.

The Second Advent of Christ Précedes the Millennium.—That the second advent precedes the millennium is clear from the fact that the narrative of Rev. 19 and 20 is continuous. The second advent is symbolically portrayed in ch. 19:11–21, and the narrative is carried on without a break into ch. 20, which discusses the millennial period. The continuity of narrative is clearly demonstrated by the interrelation of events. The three great powers that will oppose the work of Christ and gather the kings of the earth to battle immediately prior to the advent are identified as the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (ch. 16:13). According to ch. 19:19, when "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies" assemble to make war with Christ at the time of His advent, the beast and the false prophet are taken and cast alive into a lake burning with fire and brimstone (vs. 20, 21). The narrative of ch. 20 proceeds to show the fate of the third member of the trio, the dragon, who is seized and cast into the bottomless pit, where he remains for 1000 years.

Any definition or description of the millennium must be based on the framework of the millennial doctrine set forth in chs. 19 and 20, for this is the only Scripture passage that deals directly with this doctrine.

Christ's Enemies Slain at the Second Advent.—When the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), "the remnant" (v. 21), or "the rest," of their followers are slain by the sword of Christ. These are the kings, captains, mighty men, and "all men, both free and bond" (v. 18). The same classes are mentioned under the sixth seal, as seeking to hide from the face of the Lamb (ch. 6:14–17) when the heavens depart as a scroll and every mountain and island is moved. Obviously these scriptures depict the same earth-shattering event, the second advent of Christ.

How many are involved in the death of "the remnant" (ch. 19:21)? According to ch. 13:8 there will be only two classes on earth at the time of the advent: "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life." It is evident, therefore, that when "the remnant" are "slain with the sword" (ch. 19:21), there are no survivors except those who have withstood the beast, namely, those who are written in the book of life (ch. 13:8). Before mentioning that this group enters upon its millennial reign (ch. 20:4), John relates how the third great enemy, the dragon, will begin to receive his retribution (vs. 1–3).

The Righteous Dead Raised at the Second Advent.—The Bible sets forth two resurrections, that of the just and that of the unjust, separated by a period of 1000 years (see on Rev. 20:1, 4, 5). There cannot be one general resurrection, for there is a resurrection to which apparently not all attain (Phil. 3:11; cf. Luke 14:14; 20:35. The just are elsewhere described as "they that are Christ's at his coming" 1 Cor. 15:23). Some hold that Rev. 20:4 describes only the Christian martyrs. However, a comparison with other scriptures shows that all the righteous, including the OT saints (see on Rom. 4:3; 1 Cor. 15:18) and the living righteous, immortalized at the time (1 Cor. 15:51–54), ascend to be with Christ at the second advent (see on 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

There is no valid scriptural basis for separating the "blessed and holy" ones, who have withstood the persecution of the beast, from the immortal saints mentioned in 1 Thess. 4 and 1 Cor. 15.

The Unity of the Second Advent.—The various Biblical references to the second advent combine to portray as a single event the coming of Christ to gather up His saints and to destroy their persecutors. The main references may be summarized as follows:

1. *Matt. 24:29–31*. The coming of Christ will be visible, "in the clouds of heaven," "after the tribulation." Jesus will send His angels "with a great sound of a trumpet" to "gather together his elect."
2. *1 Cor. 15:23, 51–53*. They "that are Christ's at his coming"—both resurrected dead and living—receive immortality when "the trumpet shall sound."
3. *1 Thess. 4:15–17*. The Lord descends "with the trump of God" to resurrect and catch up "the dead in Christ," together with those who "are alive and remain" until the day of His coming. They are caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," to "ever be with the Lord."
4. *2 Thess. 1:6–8*. The church's "rest" from persecution comes when Christ is "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire"to punish those who "obey not the gospel."
5. *2 Thess. 2:1–3, 8*. The "gathering together unto him [Christ]," concerning which the Thessalonians were troubled, will not come until after the "falling away" and the revealing of "that Wicked [the Antichrist]" who will be destroyed "with the spirit of his [Christ's] mouth" and "the brightness of his coming."
6. *Rev. 1:7*. His coming will be "with clouds," and visible to "every eye."
7. *Rev. 14:14–20*. When Christ comes He will reap a double harvest—the righteous and the unrighteous.
8. *Rev. 19:11 to 20:6*. At His coming, symbolized as a warrior accompanied by the armies of heaven, Christ casts the persecuting "beast" and "false prophet" into the lake of fire, and slays the rest of His enemies with the sword "out of his mouth." An angel binds Satan. The faithful—resurrected dead and living—are rewarded; they reign "with Christ a thousand years."

These Scripture references agree in picturing the glorious return of the Lord as one single, visible event. They show that this one event will accomplish (1) the gathering up of the saints immortal from the earth to be with Him, obviously in the heavenly "mansions" in the place that Christ has gone to prepare for them (John 14:2, 3), and (2) the slaying of the persecutors of the last generation, with all the unrighteous, by the consuming glory of His coming.

Thus it is evident that when the millennium begins, all human beings have either been taken to heaven in immortality or have been left dead on the desolated earth. It is this depopulation of the earth that binds Satan (see on Rev. 20:1, 2). He is unable to reach the redeemed and powerless to deceive his own human subjects until they live again at the end of the "thousand years" (v. 5).

Mistakenly Basis of Belief in Earthly Millennium.—Some hold that the millennium will be a period of righteousness, peace, and prosperity *on earth*. They arrive at this concept largely from applying to the millennium, either literally or figuratively, the prophecies of restoration and of the kingdom given to ancient Israel in the OT. The premillennialists belonging to this group apply these prophecies literally to either a churchly or a Jewish world kingdom in a future millennium after the second coming. The postmillennialists apply these same predictions to a future churchly golden age before the second advent. A third group, the amillennialists, reduce the OT portrayals of the

kingdom offered to ancient Israel to mere allegories of the victories of the church in the gospel dispensation.

The fallacy of these three positions is twofold: (1) None of these positions fits the specifications laid down in Rev. 19:11 to 20:15, the primary Scripture passage dealing with the millennium. This passage shows plainly that there will be no living human being on the earth during that period (see above; cf. on ch. 20:1). Hence, the millennium cannot be a period of righteousness, peace, and prosperity on earth. (2) These positions are based on a false concept of the nature of OT prophecies.

For example, many premillennialists hold the view that these kingdom prophecies are literal and unalterable decrees that must yet be fulfilled to literal Israel, that is, to the Jews (for the term "Israel" as applied to Jews of any tribe see on Acts 1:6). This mistaken belief has resulted in a system known as futurism (see p. 129), which, instead of regarding the Christian church as the inheritor of the promises made to Israel, considers the Christian age a "parenthesis" in prophecy, that is, as filling up the gap until the ancient prophecies concerning Israel will in the future be literally fulfilled (cf. p. 129).

Interpreters of this school apply the greater part of the predictions of Revelation principally to the Jews, and believe that these predictions will be fulfilled in what they call the "end time." They expect the OT kingdom prophecies given to Israel to be fulfilled during the millennium. They divide up sacred history into dispensations, or periods, in which the "church age" is regarded as an interim dispensation of grace between past and future Jewish ages of law. This division into dispensations logically requires a "pretribulation rapture" (see on 1 Thess. 4:17) in order to remove the Christian saints from the earth before the Jewish "tribulation period." These interpreters hold further that the surviving Jews will accept Christ when He appears in the clouds after the tribulation; then, with the surviving "nations" they will enter the millennium, and while still mortal, will live on a partly renovated earth. At this time, according to this view, the Jews will enjoy not only material prosperity and long life but also the restored Davidic kingdom, a restored temple and "commemorative" sacrificial system, the law, the Sabbath, political world dominion, enforcement of Christ's "rod-of-iron rule" over submissive but finally rebellious nations—all this in an earthly millennial kingdom, while the Christian saints are reigning with Christ in immortality.

Following are some of the principles of OT prophetic interpretation overlooked by those who reserve the OT kingdom prophecies for the Jews of a future age (see Vol. IV, pp. 25–38; see on Deut. 18:15).

1. *The promises to ancient Israel were conditional*. God said, "*If* ye will obey …, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19:5; cf. Deut. 7; 8; 27–30; Jer. 18:6–10; see Vol. IV, p. 34).

2. *National Israel failed to meet the conditions, hence lost the kingdom and the promises*. When Christ, the Son of David, came, and the Jewish nation rejected her King, she lost the kingdom (see on Matt. 21:43; cf. on Rev. 20:1).

3. *The Christian church, "spiritual Israel," is now the inheritor of the promises*. The failure of literal Israel does not mean that "the word of God hath taken none effect" (Rom. 9:6). When national Israel was cut off, like dead branches, from the true stock of Abraham, the true Israel was then the faithful Jewish remnant that accepted the Messiah (see on Rom. 11:5), and to these Jewish Christians were added the Gentile Christians,

grafted into the original stock. Thus the tree now includes the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 26–29), namely, the Christian church.

Paul says that "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26), but he makes it abundantly clear that "all Israel" does not mean all the Jews (see comment there). He excludes the mere "children of the flesh" and includes only "the children of the promise" (Rom. 9:6–8). To these he joins those Gentiles that have the true, spiritual circumcision, which comes from Christ (Rom. 2:26, 28, 29; Col. 2:11; see on Rom. 11:25, 26; Phil. 3:3). He says specifically that non-Jews saved by the grace of Christ are no longer strangers and foreigners to "the commonwealth of Israel" and "the covenants of promise," but are "fellowcitizens with the saints" (Eph. 2:8–22). In spiritual Israel "there is neither Jew nor Greek," but in Christ all are one (Gal. 3:28).

Paul applies to "all the seed," Jewish and Gentile Christians, the promise of the kingdom (see on Rom. 4:13, 16). Peter quotes, almost verbatim, the key passage (Ex. 19:5, 6) that promises Israel the status of a chosen people, a holy nation, a "kingdom of priests," and applies it to non-Jewish Christians. This shows that he regards the Christian church as heir of the special status formerly held by disobedient Israel (see on 1 Peter 2:5–10). John twice uses a phrase that seems to allude to this same Exodus passage: "a kingdom, priests," "a kingdom, and priests" (see on Rev. 1:6; 5:10), showing that he makes a similar application of that kingdom promise to the church—not only to the future church triumphant but also to the Christians of Asia Minor. For other examples of inspired NT applications of some of Israel's promises and prophecies to the church in apostolic times see Acts 2:16–21; 13:47; 15:13–17.

4. *Prophecies originally literal may be fulfilled spiritually to "spiritual Israel" in this age and transcendently in the world to come*. The NT applications show that prophecies given literally to ancient Israel may have a nonliteral fulfillment for the church under the new conditions in the Christian age and a final fulfillment, without the elements of mortality, in the eternal kingdom.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3GC 658
1–151T 67–71
2–4EW 290
4 EW 52
4–6GC 661
5 EW 52, 89
5, 6 EW 292
5–9EW 53
6 EW 51; GC 544, 673; SR 429
7–9EW 293; GC 664
9 EW 52, 54, 294; GC 672, 673
11 GC 665
11, 12 COL 318; CS 314; FE 261; GC 666; SR 422; 8T 28
12 GC 480, 486, 549; PP 326, 357; TM 224; 4T 453; 6T 310
12, 13 EW 52
13 4T 116
13, 14 GC 544
14 EW 295; PP 461

CHAPTER 21

1 *A new heaven and a new earth*. 10 *The heavenly Jerusalem, with a full description thereof.* 23 *She needeth no sun, the glory of God is her light*. 24 *The kings of the earth bring their riches unto her*.

1. New. Gr. *kainos*, "new" in quality as opposed to that which is worn or marred. Both occurrences of "new" in this verse are translations of *kainos*. *Neos*, also translated "new" in the NT (Matt. 9:17; 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 3:10; etc.), refers to newness in point of time. By using the word *kainos*, John is probably emphasizing the fact that the new heavens and earth will be created from the purified elements of the old, and thus be new in quality, different. The new heavens and the new earth are, then, a re-creation, a forming anew of existing elements, and not a creation *ex nihilo*. Compare 2 Peter 3:13.

Were passed away. That is, in so far as their former, marred state is concerned. That which was perfect as it came from the hand of the Creator, which He pronounced as "very good" (Gen. 1:31), had become terribly marred by sin and could not be allowed to continue throughout eternity.

No more sea. The clause reads literally, "and the sea is not any longer," that is, the seas as we know them now will not exist in the new creation. Some have insisted that this "sea" is symbolic of peoples, nations, tongues (cf. ch. 17:15); but if so, the heavens and the earth would necessarily be symbolic also. Here John simply affirms that the heavens, the earth, and the seas will no longer exist as we know them now (cf. PP 44).

2. Holy city. Ancient Jerusalem contained the Temple, where God could manifest His presence to His people (1 Kings 8:10, 11; 2 Chron. 5:13, 14; 7:2, 3), even as He had done at the door of the tabernacle in the desert (Ex. 29:43–46; 40:34–38). The city was described as "holy" (Dan. 9:24; Matt. 27:53), but in the course of time the spiritual degradation of God's people became so great that Jesus pronounced the Temple a "den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13), and predicted the fall of the city (Matt. 22:7; Luke 21:20). Now God promises a new kind of Jerusalem, which John describes as the "new Jerusalem."

New. Gr. *kainos*, new in kind and quality (see on v. 1). Compare Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14.

Coming down. In vision John beheld the city as it descended (cf. PP 62).

From God. God is the author, the originator, the source.

Out of heaven. Its place of origin (cf. chs. 3:12; 21:10).

Prepared. The form of the word thus translated suggests that the preparation had been initiated in the past and brought to perfection, so that the city now stands fully prepared (cf. GC 645, 648).

Bride. The city is here represented as the bride (see on ch. 19:7).

Adorned. Gr. *kosmeō*, "to arrange," "to furnish," "to adorn." The English word "cosmetics" is derived from *kosmeō*. The form of the Greek verb suggests that the adorning had begun in the past and had by now been brought to completion.

Husband. That is, the Lamb, Christ (ch. 19:7).

3. Great voice. The speaker is not identified. It is presumably not God, for He is spoken of in the third person.

Tabernacle. Gr. *skēnē*, "tent," "booth," "tabernacle." The verb *skēnoō*, "to tent," "to dwell," appears in John 1:14: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (see comment there). This visible presence of God was made plain by the Shekinah in the days of the theocracy, and later by the personal appearance of Jesus Christ as a member of the human family, dwelling among men. The great voice from heaven now stresses the wonderful fact of a new creation and of God dwelling personally with His people.

With men. Later in the verse the phrase "with them" appears twice. Three times in this verse the apostle uses the preposition "with," thereby stressing the amazing fact of God keeping company with men throughout eternity, making His home with them.

Dwell. Gr. *skēnoō* (see above on "tabernacle"). With this verse compare Eze. 37:27. Ezekiel describes conditions as they might have been; John, conditions as they will be fulfilled.

4. All tears. Literally, "every tear." See on Rev. 7:17; cf. Isa. 25:8; 65:19.

Death. The clause reads literally, "the death shall be no longer." The definite article is of significance. John speaks of "the death"—the principle of death that came in as a result of sin. The definite article has, here, the force of a demonstrative. John says in effect, "this death, the one we know so well and fear so much, shall be destroyed." Compare the language of Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory," literally, "The death was swallowed down in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54); "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death [literally, "the death"]" (v. 26).

Sorrow. Grief, such as accompanies bereavement. The causes for sorrow will be completely removed. Compare Isa. 35:10.

Crying. Gr. *kraugē*, "outcry," "clamor," "crying." No cause for crying will exist in that beautiful land of tomorrow.

Pain. Much of life's misery and anguish is the result of harassing pain. Pain will be completely banished in that beautiful world of tomorrow.

Former things. That is, conditions as we know today will pass away. There will be nothing that bears the mark of the curse (ch. 22:3).

5. He that sat. Or, "the one sitting." He is not identified (cf. on ch. 20:11). In ch. 4:2 (see comment there) the Father is represented as seated on the throne, and the same may here be implied. Some point to Matt. 25:31 as evidence that the reference may be to Jesus Christ.

Behold. The speaker calls attention to something important about to be disclosed.

All things. Nothing of the curse is to remain (cf. ch. 22:3).

New. Gr. *kainoi* (see on v. 1).

Write. See on ch. 1:11. At different points in John's experience in vision the command to write is repeated (chs. 1:19; 2:1; 14:13; etc.).

True and faithful. That is, genuine and trustworthy. The words and promises of God are altogether trustworthy and may therefore be depended upon. (See ch. 22:6.)

6. It is done. Rather, "It has come to pass." Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "They have come to pass," or "They have occurred." Important textual evidence may also be cited for the reading "I have become the Alpha and the Omega …" What God had promised through His holy prophets and to which His righteous people have looked forward with eager anticipation, will finally become an accomplished fact.

The preview given to John is a guarantee of the final accomplishment yet to be carried out.

Alpha and Omega. See on ch. 1:8.

Athirst. The true believer is not eager to amass the things of this world, to be rich in worldly goods. Rather, he is eager to drink deeply of the spiritual riches from God.

Fountain. Or, "spring." Compare John 4:14; Rev. 7:17; 22:17.

Of life. The passage may be translated, "out of the spring of that water which is life itself." This is the promise of immortality (1 Cor. 15:53).

Freely. That is, "gratuitously." The gift of immortality may be purchased "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1).

7. Overcometh. That is, according to the Greek, continually conquers, or habitually conquers. The Christian lives the victorious life by the power of the Holy Spirit. He may make mistakes (see on 1 John 2:1), but his normal life presents a picture of spiritual growth (cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

All things. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "these things," that is, the promises given in the Revelation, particularly the things mentioned in this chapter.

His God … my son. Compare Gen. 17:7; 2 Sam. 7:14. The promise of intimate family connection is here set forth. The sinner saved by grace will be received into the family of God and be brought into a relation as close as if he had never sinned. The inhabitants of unfallen worlds cannot be closer to God and Christ than will be the redeemed sinner. See DA 25, 26.

8. But. A strong contrast is now presented.

Fearful. Gr. *deiloi*, "cowardly," "fearful." The word is always used in the evil sense of cowardice, or unwarranted timidity. Compare its use in Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:40; the related verb in John 14:27; and the related abstract noun in 2 Tim. 1:7. In each instance cowardice is the basic meaning. Owing to cowardice, moral faintheartedness, many fail to overcome in the Christian warfare; they give up in the time of trial. Compare Matt. 24:13.

Unbelieving. That is, those who lack faith, in the sense of not remaining faithful. They do not trust God to the end; they prove to be untrustworthy.

Abominable. Gr. *bdelussō*, "to make foul," "to turn away in disgust from," "to detest," related to the verb *bdeō*, "to stink." The noun *bdelugma* occurs in Luke 16:15; Rev. 17:4, 5; 21:27.

Murderers. These include the persecutors and murderers of God's faithful children throughout history.

Whoremongers. Gr. *pornoi*, "fornicators" (see 1 Cor. 5:9, 10; etc.). The feminine form is translated "harlots" in Matt. 21:31, 32; Luke 15:30. Compare on Eph. 5:3, 5.

Sorcerers. Gr. *pharmakoi*, "practicers of magical arts." Basically, the root refers to magic, enchantment, sorcery, and to the use of drugs to produce a stupefied condition. A modern counterpart of the ancient practice of sorcery is spiritism.

Idolaters. A reference to heathen peoples, as well as to Christians who practice heathenish rites. Compare on 1 Cor. 5:10; 6:9; 10:7.

Liars. Including those who preach false doctrines. See on Ex. 20:16; see PP 309.

Second death. See on ch. 20:6.

9. One of the seven angels. One of the plague-bearing angels had already shown John the judgment of the great harlot (see ch. 17:1). Now, one of them (possibly the same angel, as some suggest) directs John's attention to the New Jerusalem, the center and seat of the eternal kingdom. It is of interest to note that in the first instance it was a plague-bearing angel that presented mystical Babylon to the prophet, whereas now it is one of them who shows him the New Jerusalem. Historically, ancient Babylon and Jerusalem were traditional enemies, and figuratively they represent the two sides of the great controversy between evil and good. The one is represented as a fallen woman (ch. 17:5), the other as an honorable woman (chs. 19:7; 21:2).

The Lamb's wife. See on ch. 19:7; cf. ch. 21:2.

10. In the spirit. That is, in a trance, in vision (see on ch. 1:10). The carrying away was "in a vision" (cf. on Eze. 8:3; Dan. 8:2).

To a great. In vision John seemed to be deposited *upon* a "great," that is, a high mountain. From this vantage point he beheld the details of the city (cf. on Eze. 40:2).

Descending. Compare v. 2.

11. Glory of God. This probably refers to the abiding presence of God with His people throughout eternity. The glory that denotes His presence will never leave the New Jerusalem. Compare Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11.

Light. Gr. *phōstēr*, "a luminary," "a light-giving body." The word occurs in Phil. 2:15 in the clause, "among whom ye shine as lights [luminaries] in the world." The "light" of the city is the "glory" of God, mentioned in the preceding comment (see Rev. 21:23).

Jasper. Gr. *iaspis* ch. (see on 4:3). The passage reads literally, "having the glory of God, her luminary, like a stone most precious, as jasper, flashing forth."

Clear as crystal. Gr. *krustallizō*, "to flash forth light," "to scintillate." The English term "crystal" is derived from *krustallizō*.

12. Wall great and high. Such walls were built around ancient cities for protection against enemies. John's imagery is borrowed in part from the description of the city Ezekiel saw (see on Eze. 48:35). The picture is that of an ancient city with walls and gates. These were terms with which the apostle was familiar, and Inspiration chose to reveal the glories of the eternal city to him in terms that he understood. Human language and human portrayals cannot adequately represent the grandeur of that celestial city. In pictorial prophecy the degree of identity between the picture and the actual calls for careful interpretation (see on Eze. 1:10; 40:1).

Twelve gates. Compare the city described by Ezekiel (ch. 48:31–34).

Twelve angels. The New Jerusalem is pictured as having angelic gatekeepers.

Twelve tribes. See Eze. 48:31–34. For the picture of spiritual Israel reckoned by tribes see on Rev. 7:4.

13. On the east three gates. Ezekiel's enumeration is in the order, north, east, south, west (Eze. 48:31–34). John's order is east, north, south, west. The difference is doubtless without significance.

14. Twelve foundations. The number "twelve" is given five times in vs. 12–14. For twelve as a significant number see on ch. 7:4.

Twelve apostles. The NT church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).

15. Reed. Compare Eze. 40:3; Rev. 11:1. Here the act of measuring and the stating of measurements are doubtless to give assurance of the adequacy and sufficiency of the heavenly home (cf. on John 14:2).

16. Foursquare. There is beauty inherent in right proportion, perfect balance, and congruity. For various foursquare items see Ex. 27:1; 28:16; 30:2; 39:9; 2 Chron. 3:8; Eze. 41:21; 43:16; 45:2; 48:20.

Twelve thousand furlongs. A furlong (*stadion*) is about 606 ft. 6 in., or 185 m. (see Vol. V. p. 50). Thus, 12,000 furlongs would be about 1,378.4 mi. (2,218 km.). The text does not state whether this is a measure of the circumference or of one side. If the former, the city would measure about 344.6 mi. (551.4 km.) to a side. For the custom of measuring a city by its circumference see *The Letter of Aristeas* 105. It should be noted that the English furlong is not identical with the *stadion*.

Equal. Various attempts have been made to explain the dimensions of the city. It is difficult to envision a city reaching upward of 12,000 (or 3,000) furlongs (see above on "twelve thousand furlongs"). Some, though not denying the reality of the city, believe that the measurements here, like those of the wall, are "the measure … of the angel" (see on v. 17). They hold that it is therefore scarcely possible that human dimensions can here be intended. Others point to a similarity between the size of the city here described and that envisioned by the Jews. This question is discussed thus in the Midrash: "Whence the length and breadth and height [of Jerusalem]? And it enlarged itself and increased ever upward, Eze. 41:7. It has been taught, R. Eli'ezer b. Ja'aqob has said: Jerusalem will ultimately rise up and mount up to the throne of glory, and will say to God: 'Too restricted is my space, recede from me that I may dwell!' Isa. 49:20" (*Pesiqtha* 143a, cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, p. 849).

Still others assign to the word here translated "equal" (*isos*) the meaning "proportion," and believe that although the length and breadth may well be equal, the height will be proportionate to the other dimensions. This is possible, although it is difficult to demonstrate such a definition from either Biblical or classical sources. Another interpretation permits *isos* to retain its normal meaning but observes that the word here translated height (*hupsos*) may mean not only "height" but also "the high part," "the top," "the summit," "the crown." If *hupsos* is understood in this sense, John means that the distance around the top of the wall is the same as that around the bottom.

Whatever uncertainty there may be as to the exact proportion or size of the city, it is certain that the glories of that celestial city will far exceed the fondest imagination. None need be concerned, for there will be room enough for all who desire residence. In the Father's house there are "many mansions" (John 14:2).

17. Measured the wall. On the basis of the NT cubit, which was about 17 1/2 in. (44.5 cm.) (see Vol. V, p. 50), 144 cu. would be about 210 ft. (64 m.). John does not say that this measurement represents the height of the wall. Some have conjectured that it may be that of its thickness.

Of the angel. In the Greek there is no definite article with "angel." The passage reads, "of a man, even of an angel." The meaning is somewhat obscure. Because of this, some urge we should refrain from dogmatically applying purely human standards of

measurement to the New Jerusalem. Whatever the dimensions, we may rest assured that all is perfection. The saints will understand the significance of John's figures when they see the city.

18. Building. Gr. *endomēsis*, "a building in," from *dōmaō*, "to build." The word occurs only here in the NT. Josephus (*Antiquities* xv. 9. 6) uses it of a mole, a sea wall built out into the sea as an inset in the water. Here *endomēsis* may refer to an inset in the wall as though the wall were inlaid, or studded, with jasper.

Jasper. See on ch. 4:3.

Pure gold. The structure of the city appears to have the transparency of glass. Its flashing beauty doubtless changes with every ray of light that falls upon it.

19. Garnished. Gr. *kosmeō*, "to adorn" (cf. on v. 2).

Precious stones. Twelve kinds of precious stones are listed as being in the foundation. Not all of these can be identified by the modern jeweler, nor is much to be gained by making a comparison with the jewels of the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17–20). Neither ancient sources nor modern scholars agree as to the identification of all the stones. Some of their suggestions are listed below under the respective stones.

Jasper. See on ch. 4:3.

Sapphire. Perhaps lapis lazuli, a transparent or translucent sky-blue stone of great hardness.

Chalcedony. The identification of this stone is uncertain. The RSV reads "agate." Some suggest a gem of greenish color.

Emerald. Believed to be a gem of bright-green color.

20. Sardonyx. Perhaps an onyx with red and brown layers against a white background.

Sardius. Believed to be a reddish-colored gem. The RSV reads "carnelian," a reddish variety of chalcedony.

Chrysolyte. Literally, "golden stone." A yellow-colored stone of uncertain identification.

Beryl. Believed to be a gem of sea-green color.

Topaz. Believed to be a more or less transparent yellow-colored stone used by the ancients for making both seals and gems. Some think the gold-colored chrysolite is meant.

Chrysoprasus. The modern chrysoprase is an apple-green, transparent gem. There is some uncertainty as to whether this is the stone here referred to.

Jacinth. Probably a purple-colored gem. Some identify the jacinth with the modern sapphire.

Amethyst. Thought to be a purple-colored gem.

21. One pearl. The size of the gems listed is beyond human comprehension.

22. Temple. Gr. *naos*, the word for the sanctuary is confined to the holy and most holy places, not including the outer courts and other buildings. For *hieron*, the word for the entire sacred enclosure, see on Luke 2:46; Rev. 3:12.

The earthly sanctuary was symbolic of the dwelling place of God. Because of their sin Adam and Eve were driven from Eden and the presence of God. When sin has been

removed, the church will again be able to dwell in His presence, and no structure will be required to symbolize the dwelling of God.

23. No need. Light-giving bodies will not be imperative for the illumination of the city. The glorious effulgence of the presence of God will give more than sufficient light (cf. Isa. 60:19, 20). Material things are not indispensable in God's plan; in His presence they are put to shame (cf. Isa. 24:23). Created light cannot outshine the uncreated glory of the divine presence.

24. Nations. A description of the redeemed from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9; cf. Isa. 60:3, 5).

Kings. The picture is drawn from the OT (see Isa. 60:11).

25. No night. Doubtless because of the circumstances mentioned in v. 23 (cf. on Zech. 14:7).

26. Of the nations. Compare v. 24.

27. Any thing that defileth. Doubtless an allusion to Isa. 52:1. Much of the imagery in John's description of the Holy City is borrowed from the writings of ancient prophets who described the glories of the Jerusalem that might have been. John is describing the city that will be (see on Eze. 48:35).

Worketh abomination. See on v. 8.

Maketh a lie. See on v. 8.

Book of life. See on Phil. 4:3.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AH 539; GC 674; PP 62; SR 430
1, 2 Ed 301
1–271T 67–71
2 AA 591; EW 18, 31, 291; GC 427, 663
3 AA 592; DA 26; Ed 302; MB 108
3, 4 GC 676; SR 431
4 AA 602; AH 543, 544; GC 568; Ed 302; EW 289; MB 17; MH 506, 508; ML 153, 348, 349, 355; SR 413; 8T 42, 45; 9T 287
6 Ed 83; EW 279; FE 363; 1T 484
6, 7 GC 540
8 2T 630; 4T 336
9, 10 EW 251; GC 426
10–14EW 18, 291
11 GC 676; SR 431
11, 12 AA 591
18, 19 ML 357
21, 22 AA 592
22 GC 676; ML 365; SR 432
23 Ed 301; EW 170, 179, 286; ML 357
24 GC 676
27 AA 76; CH 103, 285; GC 474, 481; MB 24; ML 321; MM 144, 268; PK 84; PP 326; SL 31; Te 69; TM 149; 5T 278, 331, 384, 475

[8]

CHAPTER 22

1 *The river of the water of life*. 2 *The tree of life*. 5 *The light of the city of God is himself*. 9 *The angel will not be worshipped*. 18 *Nothing may be added to the word of God, nor taken therefrom*.

1. Pure river. The angel had shown John the exterior of the city (ch. 21:10), and now calls his attention to certain things in the interior. Compare Ezekiel's description of the river (see on Eze. 47:1).

Clear. Gr. *lampros*, "brilliant," "bright." Compare the use of the word in Luke 23:11; Acts 10:30; Rev. 15:6; 19:8; 22:16.

Out of the throne. Compare on Eze. 47:1; Zech. 14:8.

2. Tree of life. Compare Ezekiel's "many trees" (see on Eze. 47:7, 12). For the tree in the original Garden of Eden see on Gen. 2:9. For its subsequent history see 8T 288, 289. The tree is a symbol of eternal life from the source of life. Compare Rev. 21:10 with PP 62; GC 645, 648; EGW Supplementary Material on Rev. 22:2.

Twelve … fruits. There will be a constant abundance, sufficient to fill all the life needs of the saved throughout eternity. Compare Eze. 47:12.

Healing. Gr. *therapeia*, "service," "healing," sometimes, collectively, "household attendants." There are only four occurrences of the word in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:45; Luke 9:11; 12:42). In classical Greek *therapeia* has the various meanings of "service," "nurture," "care." For the function of the tree of life in Eden restored see references above under "tree of life."

3. Curse. Gr. *katathēma*, "the thing [or "person"] cursed." The word is probably to be distinguished from *anathēma*, a curse pronounced as a sentence upon some thing or some person.

Throne. This suggests that God and Christ will reign in the city. This is possible because no accursed thing will be found there.

Shall serve. Gr. *latreuō*, "to serve," "to worship," "to minister." The word refers to normal, natural, spontaneous serving, and is distinguished from *leitourgeō*, the word that means official service, service in an appointed office (see Ex. 29:30, LXX).

4. See his face. An expression denoting intimate relations with another person, and mutual confidence. See Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; 1 John 3:2. Compare the experience of Moses (Ex. 33:20–23).

In their foreheads. Rather, "upon their foreheads." The divine name in the forehead is a symbol of ownership and authentication. The saints' entire consecration in a life of worship to God is here stressed (see chs. 7:3; 13:16).

5. No night. This verse draws a word picture emphasizing the insignificance of created luminaries in the presence of God. These will pale into nothingness in the presence of the glory of the divine person (see on ch. 21:23).

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[8]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 20:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Giveth them light. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "will illuminate them." This condition represents a re-establishment and recommencement of harmonious relations, which relations had been severed by sin.

They shall reign. Compare ch. 5:10. This does not mean they will reign over one another, nor over other worlds. It is probably, rather, a figure of the felicity of the redeemed. No longer will they be under the oppressive hand of some persecuting power. They will enjoy the freedom and abundance of kings.

6. Faithful and true. A statement of the trustworthiness and genuineness of God's revelation; the prophecy as given by the angel is authentic.

Of the holy prophets. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "of the spirits of the prophets." The "spirits of the prophets" may be regarded as a reference to the prophets' own spirits under the control of the Holy Spirit when they were in vision. The Holy Spirit illumined John's spirit as He had the spirits of the OT prophets (see ch. 1:10). The entire Revelation is a testimony to the control of John's spirit in vision by the Holy Spirit.

7. Quickly. The angel is quoting Jesus. The reference is to the second coming. See on ch. 1:1.

Blessed. Another of the seven beatitudes of Revelation (cf. chs. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:14).

The sayings. That is, the various counsels and warnings of the book.

8. Saw. The passage reads literally, "I John, the one seeing these things and hearing."

Fell down to worship. Perhaps as an act of homage, which act the angel rejected. The grandeur of the vision must have completely overwhelmed the prophet and made him feel extremely humble. Moreover, the angel had been quoting Jesus Christ as if the Lord Himself were speaking.

9. Fellowservant. See on ch. 19:10.

Which keep the sayings. Compare ch. 19:10, where apparently the same group is described as "thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." "The sayings of this book" are the testimony of Jesus (see on ch. 1:2).

Worship God. See on ch. 14:7.

10. Seal not. This is opposite to the command given Daniel concerning his book (see on Dan. 12:4). The messages of the book of Revelation were not to be sealed, in view of the fact that "the time is at hand." This had not been true in Daniel's day. The words "seal not" are a negative statement that means, in substance, "Publish the sayings of the prophecy of this book far and wide."

The time is at hand. See on ch. 1:1, 3.

11. Unjust. The verse reads literally, "The one doing unrighteousness, let him do unrighteousness still; and the filthy one, let him be made filthy still; and the righteous one, let him do righteousness still; and the holy one, let him be made holy still." These words are especially applicable to the time when each person's future is irrevocably settled. Such a decree comes at the close of the investigative judgment (see on ch. 14:7). Some see a wider application in these statements by comparing them with the words of Christ in the parable of the Tares: "Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matt. 13:30). The free will of man is not to be interfered with. Men are to be permitted to live the life of their own choosing, so that their true character may become apparent. Each

person of each age will be made manifest in respect to the class in which he belongs, at the second coming of Christ.

12. I come quickly. See on v. 7.

Reward. Gr. *misthos*, "hire," "wages," "that which is due." Compare the use of the word in Matt. 5:12, 46; 20:8; 2 Peter 2:13.

To give. Gr. *apodidōmi*, "to pay off," "to discharge what is due," "to recompense."

Work. Gr. *ergon*, "an act done." The singular number suggests that the word is used collectively of the acts that make up the life as a whole that a person has lived. The effects of the grace of Christ or of the rejection of that grace are also taken into account when the "work" of man is examined (see on Eze. 18:22, 24).

13. Alpha and Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, used as descriptive of the Lord as the Creator of all things and as the beginning and final revelation of God to men (cf. on ch. 1:8).

Beginning and the end. All created things owe their existence to Christ; all things find their end in relation to Him. Compare on Col. 1:16, 17.

First and the last. The working out of the plan of salvation from first to last is bound up in Christ Jesus. The three titles of this verse gather up the activities of Christ in relation to man's salvation (cf. on ch. 1:17).

14. Blessed. Another blessing upon the faithful (see on v. 7).

That do his commandments. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "that wash their robes." A few manuscripts read "that washed their robes." Of the early uncials (see Vol. V, pp. 114–116) only the Sinaiticus and the Alexandrinus contain this section of Revelation, and both of these read "that wash their robes." Most of the minuscule manuscripts read "that do his commandments." The ancient versions are divided in their readings, as are the patristic quotations. The two clauses are very similar in the Greek, and it is easy to see how a scribe may have mistaken the one clause for the other, although it is impossible to know certainly which was the original reading. The following transliteration will show the similarity:

hoi poiountes tas entolas autou, "that keep his commandments."

hoi plunontes tas stolas autōn, "wash their robes."

In actual fact both readings suit the context and are in harmony with John's teaching elsewhere. On the subject of keeping the commandments see Rev. 12:17; 14:12; cf. John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 2:3–6. On the subject of washing robes see Rev. 7:14, where a company of saints is described as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Our title to heaven is the righteousness of Christ imputed: our fitness for heaven, the righteousness of Christ imparted, represented by the washed robes. The outward evidence of the righteousness of Christ imparted is perfect compliance with the commandments of God. Hence the two ideas of washed robes and obedience to commandments are closely related.

In the light of the problems of translation here discussed, it would seem wise to build the foundations of the doctrine of obedidence to God's commandments on those other passages of Scripture dealing with obedience on which no question of textual evidence has been raised. There are many such.

For a more complete study of this problem see *Problems in Bible Translation,* pp. 257–262.

The Greek word for "robes" is *stolai*, used of outer, flowing garments, marking a man of distinction. Compare the use of the word in Mark 12:38; 16:5; Luke 15:22; 20:46. The same Greek word is used in the LXX for the holy garments of Aaron and his descendants (Ex. 28:2; 29:21). Our English word "stole" is derived from *stole*. "Stole" originally designated a long, loose garment reaching down to the feet; later, an ecclesiastical vestment of silk, worn around the neck and falling from the shoulders.

Right. Gr. *exousia*, "liberty," "privilege," "right." It is to be the saints' privilege and liberty to partake of the tree of life and to enjoy immortality with Jesus Christ (cf. on v. 2).

Enter in. This is a further privilege. The New Jerusalem is to be the capital of the new earth (see GC 676).

15. Dogs. A figure for a vile, shameless person (see on Phil. 3:2).

Sorcerers. For the category of sinners here enumerated see on ch. 21:8.

16. I Jesus. Jesus authenticates the revelations recorded in the Apocalypse. See on ch. 1:1.

Mine angel. See on ch. 1:1.

Root and the offspring of David. See on ch. 5:5.

The bright and morning star. The figure is probably taken from the prophecy of Balaam (Num. 24:17). Compare Peter's reference to Christ as the "day star" (2 Peter 1:19). The messages to the churches of all ages can have no greater authentication than that here given.

17. Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the one who energizes the Christian life of the believers, who gives them the strength to live the victorious life, to overcome the devil, and to go safely through the time of trouble.

Bride. Doubtless the same figure here as in ch. 21:9, 10 (see comment there).

Say. Or, "are saying," or "keep on saying."

Come. Most commentators consider this a response to the promise of Jesus in v. 12, "Behold, I come quickly." Christ is petitioned to fulfill His promise. This is a possible interpretation. It is possible also to understand the address as an appeal to the unbelieving world to accept the gospel.

Him that heareth. The singular number designates the individual. Men will be saved as individuals, not as churches or congregations. Salvation is strictly personal. In the NT the word translated "hear" (*akouō*) generally carries the thought of hearing effectively, that is, of hearing and obeying the message heard. Such is its meaning here. Only those who hear and accept the message are qualified to repeat the call. See on Matt. 7:24.

Let him. The singular suggests that each church member as an individual must add his cry of welcome, thus publicly displaying his eager longing for the second advent and his desire that others shall enjoy the blessings of Christ.

Athirst. That is, for the things of God (cf. ch. 21:6). See on Matt. 5:6.

Come. An exhortation for each needy one to take advantage of the promise of ch. 21:6.

Whosoever will. The offer is universal. No one is excluded from the possibilities of salvation. Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The false

doctrine that certain ones are elected to be lost is denied by the revelator's statement (see on Rom. 8:29).

Water of life. Whosoever wishes to inherit immortality is invited to take of it. The living water is offered to all (see on ch. 21:6; cf. Isa. 55:1–3).

Freely. Or, "gratuitously."

18. I testify. The speaker is Jesus (see v. 20). His testimony must be accepted.

Every man. Man's relation to God and His message is a personal matter. One cannot accept another's responsibility in such things.

Heareth. Not a reference to the mere falling of the sound of the words of this book upon one's ear; rather, an allusion to one who hears and studies the import of the messages (see on ch. 1:3).

Of the prophecy. John is speaking of additions to the book of Revelation, though the same would apply to any book of the Sacred Canon.

Add. Compare Deut. 4:2; 12:32. Jesus is authenticating this book of the Revelation; He warns against deliberate changes in the message of the book. Josephus says concerning the 22 books constituting the Hebrew OT; "For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable" (*Against Apion* i. 8 [42]; Loeb ed., pp. 179, 180).

God shall add. In justice, God can do no other than to give to each his due, in harmony with his works.

19. Take away from. The one who takes away from the words of the Revelation is equally guilty with the one who adds to the words (see on v. 18).

Take away his part. The guilty one in this case will suffer three major losses: (1) the loss of immortality, and the consequent suffering of eternal death; (2) loss of any part in the corporate life of the city of the new earth; (3) loss of all the blessings and promises of the Revelation. A complete and staggering loss is here presented that nothing in this life can even remotely compensate for.

20. He which testifieth. That is, Christ. The specific reference is to the testimony in vs. 18, 19.

Surely. Gr. *nai*, a term of strong affirmation, like the Old English "verily."

Quickly. The Master reaffirms the surety and imminence of His second coming (see chs. 3:11; 22:7, 12; see on ch. 1:1).

Amen. Compare chs. 1:6, 7, 18; 3:14; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4. For the meaning of the term see on Matt. 5:18. This Amen is probably spoken by the apostle. If so it should be connected with what follows thus: "Amen, come, therefore Lord Jesus."

Come, Lord Jesus. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading, "come, Lord Jesus Christ." This exclamation is John's response to the testimony of Jesus, who assures the apostle that He is coming quickly (cf. on ch. 1:1). John was probably reminded of that night in the upper room, more than half a century before, when he heard Jesus declare, "I will come again" (John 14:3), and of that day a few weeks later, on the Mount of Olives, when he had heard the angels say, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Now, while in holy vision, John is given one last assurance that his blessed Lord is to return, and that, quickly. This assurance comes from the lips of his Master Himself, the faithful and true witness. His heart thrills at the words, and with eager

anticipation he looks forward to the day when in reality, not in vision, he will see his blessed Lord face to face.

21. The grace. This verse is a benediction, deep from the heart of the apostle, reaching out to all who read the words of his visions. The benediction is similar to that used by Paul in concluding his epistles (see Rom. 16:24; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; etc.). The words form a fitting climax to the canon of Scripture, appearing as they do at the end of the collection of sacred books as we know them.

Christ. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

You all. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "all the saints." Textual evidence may also be cited for the reading "the saints." The word "saints" occurs frequently throughout the Revelation (see chs. 5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; etc.).

Amen. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 ML 357; PP 413
1, 2 Ed 302; EW 17, 289; LS 67; 1T 61
1–5AA 592; EW 31
1–211T 67–71
2 CH 244; CSW 44; CT 34, 63; DA 366; Ev 138; EW 289; GC 675; MH 122, 173, 199; ML 342, 352, 355; MM 234; SR 22, 431; 6T 230, 393, 475; 7T 195; 8T 33, 193, 288; 9T 136, 168; WM 288
3 Ed 307; MB 17; PP 67
3, 4 COL 180; CS 46; Ed 125, 303; LS 266; MH 182, 421; ML 350; RC 54; 6T 348; 8T 268
5 AA 591; CT 344; GC 676; SR 431, 432
7 5T 266
9 DA 99; EW 231
10 6T 130; 9T 130
11 EW 48, 71, 280, 282; GC 613; MH 454; PP 201; TM 235; 484; 2T 190, 267, 355, 401; 4T 387; 5T 347, 380
11, 12 CT 418; FE 363; GC 490; 1T 343; 2T 691; 8T 315
12 CH 539; COL 310; GC 352, 422; SC 88; SR 378; TM 428; 1T 483; 2T 520, 660, 667; 4T 537; 7T 88; 9T 104
12–14FE 137; TM 133
13 Ev 485; PP 367
14 AA 592; CG 224; CS 225; EW 35, 51, 126; FE 111; GC 466; LS 103; ML 70, 340, 355; PP 62, 208; TM 235; 4T 328; 5T 628, 693
14, 15 GC 541
15 4T 336
16 TM 118, 253; 6T 58, 62
16, 17 FE 437; 6T 20
17 AA 110; CH 36, 466; COL 235, 412; CM 18, 152; CS 190; CT 371; DA 454, 745, 822; PP 413; SC 28; 4T 580; 5T 207; 6T 51, 86, 314; 9T 43
18, 19 GC 268
18–20AA 583
20 CH 539; GC 302

[9]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Re 22:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.